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# Building a pilgrim utopia : identity, security and the contradiction of crosscultural affairs at new Plymouth, 1620-1640

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# BUILDING A PILGRIM UTOPIA: IDENTITY, SECURITY AND THE CONTRADICTION OF CROSSCULTURAL AFFAIRS AT NEW PLYMOUTH, 1620-1640

by

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ABSTRACT

During the 1620's and 1630's, Plymouth colony settlers set out to establish their vision of an idealized society in North America. However, during the initial decades of colonization, New England was a region dominated by Native American peoples: their subsistence, trade, political, diplomatic and military systems played a defining role in the development of the Plymouth colony and the character of intercultural relations. The influence of Native Americans helped to determine the degree to which New World immigrants were able to create a viable autonomous community according to their own standards and interests. Colonists adapted to their new environment with varying degrees of success by adopting Native American agricultural practices, participating in pre-existing trade patterns, establishing relationships with Native American groups through "Indian" diplomatic patterns, and adapting their own agricultural and commercial traditions to the realities of New England. To achieve a self-sustaining agricultural community, settlers diffused throughout the colony, increasing their exposure to Native American peoples and vulnerability to possible hostilities. Simultaneously, colonists engaged in commercial activities involving Native Americans to remain a viable economic unit within the North Atlantic economy. In both cases, interaction between cultures, and the potential for conflict, was unavoidable. Plymouth society was militarized in consequence. Interaction threatened cultural homogeneity and colonial leaders adhered to an oppositional ideology by which to guide interrelationships. Conscious of the transformative adaptations undergone to achieve economic and military self-sufficiency, Plymouth elites struggled to define themselves in relation to their Native

American neighbors. In seeking to build an autonomous English community in New England, colonists became enmeshed in Native American politics, economics, and diplomacy. The crucial question for Plymouth leaders was how to live and participate in this Indian world while maintaining their cultural identity. Throughout the first two decades of settlement, colonists found themselves living and participating within this world, while struggling to achieve self-sufficiency, autonomy, and self-definition.

# INTRODUCTION

During the opening years of colonization in New England, Plymouth settlers tried to establish their vision of an ideal society in North America. Colonists hoped to escape what they considered religious persecution and the denigration of their culture and society. In 1608, a Pilgrim congregation led by Pastor Richard Clyfton and assistant minister John Robinson pursued that end by immigrating to Holland from their former homes in England's northern counties. There they entered into communities quite different than their own, and especially different from the idealized society they hoped to establish. Many Pilgrim separatists decided that integration into a foreign community resulted in numerous undesirable social and cultural changes. The behavior of their young people most especially concerned Pilgrim leaders. To those leaders, religious faith appeared to wane, immorality increased, familiar traditions weakened, and community cohesion eroded.

Church and community leaders, including William Brewster, William Bradford, and John Robinson, proposed another migration to counteract that perceived tendency and to eliminate the negative influences of exposure to a divergent culture and society. A minority of the Separatist community in the Dutch city of Leiden decided that North America offered a more suitable location for establishing a society based on their ideals. The Leiden group secured assistance from a group of English businessmen called the "Adventurers," and the English government issued a patent authorizing settlement in northern Virginia to businessman John Pierce. After a brief delay in England, 102 migrants, including

both Separatists and non-Separatist "Strangers,"[1] set sail for North America in 1620. Having landed in New England, outside the Virginia colony and the jurisdiction of the Anglican Church, the colonists, led by Governor John Carver, formed a civil body politic through an agreement of incorporation later called the Mayflower Compact. In 1621, John Carver died and was succeeded by William Bradford as governor and Isaac Allerton as governing assistant. Under Bradford's leadership, the Pilgrim community struggled to build a viable New World society according to their own standards and interests.

A number of Native American communities existed in New England when the Pilgrims established New Plymouth in 1620. Although permanent colonial settlements did not exist in the region prior to the Separatist arrival, many New England Indians were familiar with Europeans. Western European whalers and fishermen visited the coastal waters of Newfoundland as early as the 1480's. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, those Europeans and Native Americans of northern New England established contact and casual trade arrangements. By 1524, explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano visited Narragansett Bay and its people. Sporadic encounters, peaceful and hostile alike, became more common in the region as the century progressed, especially after the 1570's. In 1602, Indians around Martha's Vineyard and Buzzard's Bay encountered Bartholomew Gosnold and his companions during their five-week stay in the region. Nauset Indians near Provincetown familiarized themselves with the Martin Pring expedition the following year, while

[1] When the Pilgrims left for America in 1620, they brought with them people who were not members of their churches. Although immigrating to New England for their own reasons, the "Strangers" contributed necessary financial support and personnel for the Pilgrims' journey to Plymouth.

Kennebec, Penobscot, and Abenaki Indians in northern New England established relations with George Waymouth's expedition in 1605. By the time John Smith of Virginia visited the Cape Cod area in 1614, New England Indians had established trade connections with various Europeans, were frequently visited by Europeans for relatively long periods, had fought and chased away expeditions to the region, and, in a few rare instances, had been captured, taken to Europe, and subsequently returned to New England.[2]

Seventeenth-century Native American communities in New England were of three general types. In the Connecticut River Valley and Narragansett Bay regions of southern New England, Pequot, Mohegan, and Narragansett peoples engaged in semi-migratory subsistence practices revolving around concentrated village settlements. These Southern New England peoples relied heavily on maize agriculture in addition to hunting and trading for game. Population levels were high among these groups prior to the devastating epidemics of the early seventeenth century, and intraregional trade was common. There may have been 16,000 Pequot and Mohegan prior to disease-related depopulation, and as many as 20,000 Narragansett. Further north, the Pawtucket, Massachusett, Pokanoket, and other related peoples engaged in semi-sedentary subsistence practices. Native Americans around Cape Cod and Massachusetts Bay relied less on maize then their southern neighbors. They were seasonally mobile and capitalized on a wide variety of natural and agricultural food resources, including wild game and plants, coastal fish and shellfish resources, and a

[2] Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 50-56 and 85-96; Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 6-14.

number of cultigens. Although not as numerous as their southern neighbors, populations in central New England were considerable as well: the Pawtucket, Massachusett, and Pokanoket peoples each had populations of roughly 12,000 prior to the introduction of European epidemics. Indians of northern New England, including the Abenaki, lived beyond the agricultural divide. Because climate prevented a reliance on agriculture these people depended primarily on seasonal migration in pursuit of game and wild plant resources for survival. Population levels were far lower than to the south, and permanent villages seldom served as the focal point of a community.[3]

Intraregional trade among Native American peoples was a vital component of life in New England prior to and long after European arrival in the region. Native Americans exchanged resource surpluses from village to village, each community trading in what was plentiful in their locale for what was more common among their neighbors. The north-south maize-for-furs trade nexus was established well before the seventeenth century. Southern agriculturalists, including the Pequot, Narragansett, and the peoples of Cape Cod and Massachusetts Bay traded corn and other cultigens for the furs and meats of the Abenaki and other northern hunter-gatherer peoples. French trade goods became available in the north during the first two decades of the seventeenth century, and northern hunters added items manufactured in Europe to their list of resources traded with southern planters. Those

[3] Bragdon, 25-28 and 55-80.

trade patterns continued after the arrival of Plymouth colonists in 1620 and played a crucial role in defining relationships between Indians and colonists.[4]

A number of important studies have been published detailing the history of the Plymouth Colony. George D. Langdon's *A History of New Plymouth, 1620-1691,* was the first full-length study of Plymouth and provided an excellent overview of the colony designed to locate its history within the broader context of colonial New England. Langdon aimed to present the history of the colony in its own right, and avoided describing Plymouth as merely a minor predecessor of the Massachusetts Bay colony. Nonetheless, Langdon's account emphasized the similarities between Separatist Plymouth and the non-Separatist Bay. *A History of New Plymouth* focused largely on the institutional development of the colony within a comparative framework, and the social, cultural, and ideological history of Plymouth and its colonists remained conspicuously absent. John Demos provided an account equally specific to Plymouth in 1970 with the publication of *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*. Demos presented a detailed account of demographic trends in Plymouth, and of the development and significance of family life in the colony. Demos' approach, however, was restricted. *A Little Commonwealth* dealt primarily with the structure and organization of the Pilgrim family, the intellectual trends underlying that organization, and the effects of family life on the individual. While specific to Plymouth, Demos' account addressed only one small aspect of the colonial experience in that colony and failed to relate the study's subject to broader historical trends occurring during the period. Eugene Aubrey Stratton published a more

[4] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 50-59; Bragdon, 91-92.

comprehensive account in 1986, entitled *Plymouth Colony: Its History and People, 1620-1691.* Stratton's unique approach combined the disciplines of history and genealogy to illustrate the chronology of Plymouth history and topical trends in the colony's development, and to suggest new approaches to genealogical research. None of these studies, however, adequately addressed the history of Plymouth colony within the contexts of the North Atlantic trade system of the seventeenth century and of Native American New England. The pictures revealed by Langdon, Demos, and Stratton were skewed and failed to reveal the role of transatlantic commercial trade and cross-cultural relationships between Indians and colonists in guiding the development of the Plymouth community.[5]

Anthropological and archaeological studies of Native Americans in New England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have provided historians with some of the tools necessary to place the Plymouth experience within a broader cross-cultural framework. Dean R. Snow provided an overview of the archaeology of New England in *The Archaeology of New England.* Snow provided a synthesis of archaeological findings dating from the Paleo-Indian period up to the beginning of contact between Native Americans and Europeans. The study provided considerable insight into cultural trends in native New England prior to colonization, from which inferences can be made about Indian societies during the colonial period. However, Snow's account focused on a broad region including current day New York State and

[5] Extensive studies detailing the early history of Plymouth Colony include: George D. Langdon, Jr., *Pilgrim Colony: A History of New Plymouth, 1620-1691* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Eugene Aubrey Stratton, *Plymouth Colony: Its History and People, 1620-1691* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry Publishing, 1986).

coastal Maine, limiting the usefulness of the text for scholars interested in central and southern New England. Additionally, historical archaeology was absent from Snow's account, making his findings less useful to historians seeking to relate New England's prehistory to the colonial period. In *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650,* Kathleen J. Bragdon provided an anthropological account of pre-contact and contact period Native American history and culture that was far more specific to southern New England. Bragdon's account reflected efforts at revealing Indian history according to the values, aims, and cultural standards of the observed peoples. Bragdon's study provided an archaeological overview of southern New England and analyzed the social, economic, political, cultural, and demographic trends that guided communities in the region prior to and immediately following the period of European contact. Snow's and Bragdon's contributions provided researchers with the tools and approaches necessary to accurately depict Native American societies and culture at the time of English arrival at New Plymouth. When the studies of Snow and Bragdon are viewed in conjunction with the works of Langdon, Demos, and Stratton, researchers discern a foundation from which to assess interaction between English and Indian communities.[6]

Studies seeking to explain interactions between colonists and Native Americans in New England have focused on ideological trends within the immigrant communities. In *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American*

[6] The most comprehensive archaeological and anthropological surveys of native New England prior to and including the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century period of contact with Europeans are found in Bragdon's *Native People of Southern New England* and Dean R. Snow, *Archaeology of New England* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

*Frontier, 1600-1860*, Richard Slotkin discussed trends in American literature that revealed the "Indianization" or "Americanization" of European immigrants to North America. Slotkin argued that European-Americans simultaneously resisted and gave in to a mythologized New World "wilderness" and the alternative of Native American culture. Slotkin asserted that a mythology of the American experience developed in which violence against Native Americans was seen as a way of both taking intellectual and actual possession of America while affirming the cultural identity of European-Americans as they became increasingly influenced and confronted by Indian peoples.[7]

Robert F. Berkhofer took a similar approach to explain Indian-White relations in *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present.* Berkhofer argued that Euro-Americans have used images of Native Americans as either "good" or "bad" to rationalize and legitimize actions detrimental to Indians while benefiting their white counterparts. Like Slotkin's account, however, Berkhofer's study was general in scope. Although providing a framework for historical interpretation, *The White Man's Indian* focused primarily on how Euro-American attitudes affected their actions toward Native Americans. Francis Jennings also studied ideological components of relationships between Indians and colonists in seventeenth-century New England in *Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism and the Cant of Conquest.* Like Berkhofer, Jennings looked more closely at Indian culture and argued that stereotypes of Native Americans were inaccurate. Jennings

[7] Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1996).

then explained that the colonists' professed ideological understandings of Indians were merely justifications for conquest and land dispossession. As was the case with Slotkin and Berkhofer, Jennings's account dealt primarily with European attitudes and actions, and failed to reveal the role of cultural interaction in shaping colonial society. Those studies typically emphasized antagonistic trends in English ideology and revealed how such trends resulted in a dehumanization of Indians and violence against Native American peoples.[8]

Neal Salisbury presented a more balanced account of Indian-European contact than Berkhofer and Jennings in *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643.* To provide a fair assessment and presentation of Indian peoples in New England, Salisbury utilized an ethnohistorical approach that emphasized both continuities and changes in Native American history and culture during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Salisbury presented the conquest of New England in two phases: the trader phase in which Indian society and culture were disrupted through contact, and the settler phase in which European interest in land and resource exploitation led to more hostile cross-cultural relationships. Salisbury accurately pointed out that during the period of settlement in New England, English cultural understandings of Indians changed over time. Salisbury also pointed out that the pursuit of materialistic goals appeared to undermine colonists' sense of communality and religious mission. Ultimately,

[8] Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: From Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1976).

Salisbury explained, some colonists saw the conquest of New England and its Indian peoples as a way to adhere to those initial purposes for migration.[9]

In *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England,* William Cronon postulated that beginning in the colonial period, the importation of European farming techniques, cultigens, and livestock deleteriously altered the ecology of New England. *Changes in the Land* was a synthesis that drew on history, ethnohistory, and ecology to relate the activities of both Native Americans and Europeans to changes in landscape and ecology. Cronon's account was most useful in that it meticulously described the practices of subsistence and settlement, land use, and property rights of both colonists and Indians in New England. Cronon contributed to the topic of cross-cultural interaction by detailing the roles of land use and ownership, subsistence practices, and trade patterns in shaping both cooperative and antagonistic relationships between New England colonists and Native Americans.[10]

The following study is an attempt to present a comprehensive history of Plymouth Colony during the 1620's and 1630's by revealing the interrelationship between the ideology of colonial leaders, transatlantic commercial trends, and cross-cultural interaction between colonists and Native Americans that affected Puritan identity and the development of the Pilgrim community. New Plymouth was not simply a European community transplanted to North America. Leaders of the

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[9] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence.*

[10] William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

migration, in fact, had no intention of merely relocating to the New World. Rather, those leaders immigrated to New England to create a community that had not previously existed in the Old World. To those leaders, Plymouth represented the chance to create something new: a utopian community built wholly in accordance with Pilgrim values, standards, and beliefs. The Colony was not merely a refuge from persecution and economic hardship. To the founders of the Colony, migration represented the opportunity to live as they saw fit in a community of their own making.

Soon after arrival in New England, however, Plymouth leaders realized that outside influences threatened to loosen their control over their utopia-building project. As in Holland, the colonists at Plymouth became economically, politically, and geographically integrated into a region inhabited by peoples of a divergent cultural tradition. Cross-cultural interaction became more common, and Pilgrim leaders feared that social integration between colonists and Native Americans would result in cultural change at Plymouth and the degeneration of their communal identity. The presence of non-Puritan "strangers," some of whom appeared more receptive to Indian cultural traditions, magnified concerns over identity among the ruling elite. Plymouth leaders believed they had a dual task in the colony: to build an economically viable community and to maintain communal identity. The approaches leaders took in addressing that dual task, however, revealed a fundamental contradiction of policy in Pilgrim colony-building. The fostering of economic viability encouraged cross-cultural exchange and interactivity, while the maintenance of communal identity and cohesion appeared to require a segregation of culturally

distinct peoples. In consequence, Plymouth leaders adopted reactionary policies designed to enforce behavioral homogeneity within their community and military supremacy over their Native American neighbors.

Pilgrim leaders at New Plymouth based community identity on ideological convictions and adherence to behavioral norms. The policies leaders formulated in directing the development of the colony were informed by those basic, though evolving, assumptions. Chapter 1 of this study describes the general principles and beliefs characteristic of the ideology of the Pilgrim elite. The study approaches ideology as an interpretive tool that guided individual and collective action. The role of ideology in determining elite notions of community identity is emphasized. As in *The White Man's Indian,* this study focuses on ideology as a means with which colonial leaders understood Native American peoples and as a gauge elites used to supervise interaction between settlers and Indians. As in *Regeneration through Violence,* this study will illustrate how some colonists' perception of Indians reaffirmed their own sense of identity and communal mission. Plymouth elites believed that the behavior of individuals revealed the identity of the community to which they belonged. Unlike earlier studies, this account reveals how the actions of both Indians and colonists consistently shaped Pilgrim ideology; it also reveals how ideology played a role in shaping relations between Indians and colonists, and between colonial leaders and the general population at New Plymouth. This study is distinct in that it reveals elite concerns over communal identity as a fundamental aspect of colony-building at Plymouth, influencing official approaches to people both within the colony and without. Chapter 1 is designed to reveal the ways in which

colonial leaders understood the identity of the Plymouth community through the colony's relationship to culturally divergent peoples. From that foundation, a clearer understanding is garnered of the role of ideology and cross-cultural interaction in determining the policies of Plymouth elites as they applied to people both outside of the colony and within their community.

Chapter 2 of the study outlines the social, cultural, economic, demographic, and diplomatic characteristics of Native American New England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Drawn heavily from the secondary literature, Chapter 2 describes in detail the "Indian world" Plymouth colonists entered in 1620. To understand the development of the colony, an accurate depiction of New Plymouth's Native American neighbors is necessary. Further, as Chapter 3 reveals, colonists of the 1620's and 1630's found it necessary to adapt to economic and diplomatic realities in New England. The third section of this account reveals the manner in which New England colonists adapted to Indian diplomacy and politics, subsistence and settlement patterns, and economic and trade systems. A crucial connection is made between the North Atlantic trade system, the intraregional Native American maize-fur-furs exchange network, and economic and demographic trends within Plymouth Colony.

Chapter 3 reveals some of the effects of adaptation to Indian New England on the ideology of colonial elites. Unlike the studies by Jennings, Salisbury, and Cronon, this account illustrates a clearer delineation between elite interest in fostering economic and political integration, and the desire of colonial leaders to maintain social and cultural segregation. This study contends that it was precisely that

contradiction that resulted in a conspicuous militarization of the colony at Plymouth, and strenuous efforts made by elites to maintain control over communal identity through strict behavioral regulation. Chapter 3 also illustrates the relationship between colonial adaptation to Indian New England and a crisis of communal identity experienced among the colony's leadership. Colonial leaders integrated Plymouth into Native American diplomatic and political systems. Efforts by elites to ensure the colony's economic viability included policies that incorporated New Plymouth into both a North Atlantic trade system, and a pre-existing intraregional Native American economic nexus. Greater population dispersal among colonists and inter-group social and cultural intermingling resulted. Chapter 3 draws on the literary sources of the 1620's and 1630's to reveal elite concerns over socio-cultural change. The literary sources are considered in light of New Plymouth's official court records from 1633 to 1639 to illustrate official efforts to monitor and regulate the behavior of colonists and to maintain control over the structure of community identity. A statistical analysis of the promulgation of legislation and enforcement of law is used to reveal the degree to which the regulation of moral behavior concerned the colonial leadership in comparison to efforts to construct an adequate security system, expand the colony's economy, and develop the infrastructure of New Plymouth. The court records reveal considerable effort by Plymouth officials to prevent and punish the individual manifestations of behavior described by elites as those activities that compromise community identity.

Chapter 4 reveals the mounting of tensions between colonists and Native American peoples who lived outside the bounds of New Plymouth. Drawing on

Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay court records and the written commentaries of contemporary observers, chapter 4 elucidates causes of cross-cultural hostilities during the 1620's and 1630's and relates those causes to issues of Puritan ideology, elite notions of communal identity, and colonial security concerns derived from participation in the North Atlantic and Native American intraregional trade systems. Chapter 4 illustrates the contradiction in Plymouth leaders' attempts to integrate diplomatically and economically with Native American communities, while unsuccessfully seeking to avoid social and cultural intermingling for the maintenance of communal identity. Plymouth trade activities produced distinct demographic changes in the colony, while Native American trade activities caused equally significant alterations in Indian material and military culture. Those two trends magnified Plymouth leaders' fears and mistrust of Indian peoples as derived from elite ideology. By focusing so intently on communal identity through its opposition to Native American culture, Plymouth leaders intensified cross-cultural antagonisms during a period of increased intermingling of peoples. Viewed in that context, anti-Indian prejudices among colonial elites were a displaced resistance to change and to perceptions of loss of control over the identity of the Plymouth community.

Chapter 5 illustrates the degree to which colony leaders militarized Plymouth society. During the 1620's, Plymouth leaders promoted the development of a system of security to defend against potential Native American enemies. Colonial officials took steps to prevent Indians from gaining access to firearms. Leaders required the arming of all adult males in the colony and established a system of fortifications and defensive structures. During the 1630's, the Plymouth General Court and Court of

Assistants maintained the colony's security system and enforced laws requiring universal armament of male settlers.

In the opening decades of colonization at New Plymouth, commerce and accommodation between cultures aggravated colonial ideological predispositions so as to encourage militarization and efforts to maintain communal identity. During the 1620's and 1630's, Plymouth colonists integrated into pre-existing Native American trade patterns. To remain economically viable within the North Atlantic commercial community, colonists tapped into the North-South maize for furs exchange network. Short on manufactured trade items, colonists at New Plymouth increasingly relied on the production of corn as a medium of exchange for furs from hunting peoples. Colonists then used those furs as payment for debt to European creditors. That increased reliance on corn, however, encouraged geographical expansion within the colony. Throughout the period, settlers migrated further from the town of Plymouth, establishing isolated homesteads and communities to maximize agricultural yields. In the process, colonists developed necessary trade and personal relationships with Native Americans. Intimate intercultural connections became common. However, interaction and accommodation between colonists and Indians aggravated colonial ideological predispositions that pitted the two groups as culturally antagonistic. Simultaneously, geographic expansion for corn production resulted in the isolation of individual families in the countryside and a perception of military vulnerability among colonial leaders. Intermingling between colonists and Indians led some colonial leaders to believe, as was the case in Holland, that social and cultural degeneration was threatening the existence of an idealized New Plymouth. As an

elite response to the twin concerns over military vulnerability and socio-cultural denigration, Plymouth colony leaders took specific efforts to successfully militarize society and to curb behavioral tendencies believed to compromise community identity. Thus, to build and maintain an economically viable, idealized community in New England, Plymouth colonists became increasingly geographically isolated from one another and came into increased contact with Native American peoples. The practice of integration, however, was at odds with the ideal of cultural integrity and communal identity. In response, the antagonistic and oppositional elements of colonial ideology were magnified, resulting in an intensification of intercultural tensions, a militarization of Plymouth society, and increased efforts to regulate the behavior of colonists and maintain community identity.

# CHAPTER 1

## IDENTITY AND THE IDEOLOGY OF COLONIZATION

In 1620, the founders of Plymouth Colony came to North America as part of an on-going process to preserve their communal identity. Between 1550 and 1607, Separatist leaders in England struggled against both religious and governmental institutions for the right to determine the organizational character of their churches, the belief systems to which their congregants adhered, the manner in which they worshiped, and the nature of interpersonal conduct within their communities. Separatism posed a considerable threat to established authorities in England, a threat to which Queen Mary responded with violence between 1553 and 1558, and James I combated with persistent persecution following 1602. Separatist congregations believed their communities should fall outside the jurisdiction of the official Anglican Church. Individual Separatist communities hoped to establish independent societies under the control of the congregation and unanswerable to outside religious and governmental institutions. Congregations hoped to possess community institutions that were completely separate from the Church of England, the official religious institution of England to which the government and monarchy were closely tied. Kept under surveillance and facing economic hardship and the threat of imprisonment, some of those congregations decided to flee in the hope of establishing communities according to their own standards and interests. In 1607 and 1608, religious conflict and persecution by their detractors convinced church elder William

Brewster and ministers Richard Clyfton and John Robinson to lead 125 members of the Separatist congregation from Scrooby in Nottinghamshire to Amsterdam.[1]

Once in Holland, further issues complicated the Separatist endeavor to sustain communal identity. Events in England revealed the religious component of Pilgrim identity and illustrated a connection between church affairs and the social and political composition of their communities. In the Low Countries, however, social and cultural concerns became equally significant in the efforts of Pilgrim leaders to maintain a distinct and cohesive community. The Low Countries allowed the Separatists free practice of their religion, despite rising concern in Holland over Dutch non-conformist religions. Nonetheless, the immigrants remained skeptical about the "strange and uncouth language" of the Dutch, and the "different manners and customs of the people, with their strange fashions and attires; all so far differing from that of their plain country villages . . . that it seemed they were come into a new world."[2] Between their 1603 arrival in Leiden and their 1619 removal from the city, Pilgrim leaders feared that their failure to bring more of their compatriots to Holland, combined with their relative poverty, would place them "in danger to scatter," and subject them to the will of their neighbors or enemies. Leaders also feared that the "great licentiousness" of Dutch youth and the "manifold temptations of the place" and "evil examples" of their neighbors compromised the identity and well-being of their young people, "so that they saw their posterity would be in danger to degenerate and

[1] Stratton, 17-18.
[2] William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 16.

be corrupted."[3] In Holland, Pilgrim leaders added behavioral characteristics internal to their own community and the degenerative effects of a foreign culture and society to the list of impediments to the maintenance of communal identity. Leaders including William Bradford, Edward Winslow, and Nathaniel Morton learned crucial lessons from their Dutch experiment in community building: to maintain a cohesive community according to their own standards and interests, economic prosperity was essential, social homogeneity must be adequately preserved, complete religious and governmental control of the populous was necessary, behavioral standards within the community must be enforced, and exposure to foreign cultures was detrimental to both the individual and the viability and identity of the social body.[4]

When Governor John Carver and his successor, William Bradford, led their community to New England in the early 1620's, they brought with them those lessons from Holland. Upon arriving in New England, the Pilgrim voyagers agreed to form a government and live under one political body, partly to prevent the non-Separatist "Strangers" among them from using "their own liberty" to conduct their affairs, irrespective of Separatist laws and wishes. Under John Carver's leadership, the Plymouth colonists agreed to create laws "as the necessity of their condition did require, still adding thereunto as urgent occasion in several times, and as cases did require."[5] Thus, immediately upon entry into New England, the Plymouth leaders established their right to direct the government of the colony and provided the legal flexibility to guide colonial affairs on a reactionary basis. From 1620 onward, the

[3] Ibid., 24-25.
[4] Stratton, 18-19.
[5] Bradford, 75-76.

government of New Plymouth acted to ensure the survival of their community and the development of the colony in accordance with their notions of Pilgrim identity. Pilgrim colonists determined their identity according to a series of ideological convictions. Pilgrim leaders, like their counterparts in Massachusetts Bay during the 1630's, adhered to those convictions throughout the opening decades of colonization, adapting them as needed, though also reaffirming their central components in response to circumstances they experienced in New England. Colonists at Plymouth, as in the Bay a decade later, based their communal identity and purpose in New England on a set of basic, though evolving, ideological assumptions. Adherents to this ideology interpreted their migration according to mythical themes of western lands, which promised regeneration in the face of adversity abroad. Colonists understood the Native Americans they encountered in terms of cultural categories; many believed divergent societies could only be understood as polar opposites of each other, ranked on a scale of societal hierarchy. English adherents to this ideology based cultural identity on behavioral characteristics manifested by individuals within each community, many of which reaffirmed notions of colonial superiority and encouraged fear and mistrust of Indians. English interpretations of the religious significance of their migration served to further polarize understandings of colonial and native societies, dramatically influencing the sense some immigrants had of identity. The ideals prescribed for Plymouth society did not always correspond to the realities of the Colony's development, yet an adherence to their beliefs remained a determining force in the evolution of the Pilgrim community. Thus, it is necessary to outline Pilgrim and Puritan ideological convictions to understand the complexities of

interaction between English colonists and Native Americans in seventeenth-century New England, and to relate that interaction to the role of identity in New Plymouth.

Long before Europeans ever set foot on American shores, fantastical myths of western lands beyond the seas developed and played a significant role in their understanding of the world. Those mythical traditions influenced English impressions of the New World during the periods of exploration and colonization. The role of myth in shaping the course of historical development cannot be disregarded. Through myths, people determine who they are both collectively and as individuals. Further, mythology serves as a point of reference for peoples by which they place themselves and their experiences within a larger historical and universal context. Through this understanding, people learn acceptable forms of behavior; an individual's worldview largely determines how events are perceived and what specific responses those perceptions will generate. As Richard Slotkin explains in *Regeneration Through Violence,* "myth can be seen as an intellectual or artistic construct that bridges the gap between the world of the mind and the world of affairs, between dream and reality, between impulse or desire and action."[6]

English colonists came to New England with a background based in myth that dictated how they initially incorporated the Americas into their worldview. European tradition interpreted lands to the west through an Arcadian lens. The West was seen as an exotic place, unknown, mystical, uncorrupted. This primitive utopia was associated with concepts of rebirth, renewal, reason, and higher understanding. Yet,

[6] Slotkin, 6-7.

paradoxically, the West was also considered the land of sunset, death, darkness, and the underworld; it was a place of dreams beyond consciousness. Within the romantic framework of the European mythical tradition, the western lands beyond the seas were a place where heroes adventured. After confronting the destructiveness and dangers of the underworld, heroes in this tradition emerged with the blessings of rebirth, wisdom, and renewal. Drawing from this intellectual background, English colonists associated the Americas with a mythical Arcadia. In the Americas they would be confronted by danger and temptation, yet they believed their experiences in the New World would lead them to the renewal and purification of their own national and religious life.[7]

For many seventeenth-century English colonists, those themes, reaffirmed through myth, influenced their decisions to immigrate to New England. New England's place in the English worldview was determined not only by the few reported realities of New World conditions, but also by the mythical stereotypes of the West as illustrated in a romantic and Arcadian literary heritage.[8] For example, in elucidating the Pilgrims' motivations for migration, William Bradford revealed elements of this tradition. *The History of Plymouth Plantation* began by describing the hopelessly corrupt and degenerate state of Europe, "after the gross darkness of popery . . . had covered and overspread the Christian world." Immigration was seen as a way of foiling the plans of Satan and rejuvenating "the churches of God" by enabling them to "revert to their ancient purity, and recover their primitive order.

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[7] Ibid., 27-30.

[8] Paul A. Jorgensen, "Shakespeare's Brave New World," in *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 85; Slotkin, 31.

liberty, and beauty."[9] Similarly, John Winthrop drew on European romantic-Arcadian mythical themes in *A Model of Christian Charity.* In constructing a Puritan "City upon a Hill," Winthrop claimed, "The end is to improve our lives, to do more service to the Lord . . . that ourselves and posterity may be the better preserved from the common corruptions of this evil world to serve the Lord and work out our Salvation under the power and purity of His holy Ordinances." In pursuing this end, Winthrop said of New England, "there is now set before us life and good, death and evil." In facing the latter to achieve the former Winthrop prayed that "the Lord our God may bless us in the land where we go," and warned that failing to achieve the good in the face of evil would ensure that he and his company would "perish out of the good land wither we pass over this vast Sea to possess it."[10] Both Bradford and Winthrop were very clear on what they expected to gain from their New England experience. Both migrants hoped to cross the dangerous ocean to the lands of the West, where, while enduring great trials and dangers, they and their companions would emerge as the enlightened founders of a renewed and purified society. The parallels between the Pilgrim-Puritan interpretation of their migration and the romantic-Arcadian tradition of mythical voyages to the lands of the West were clear.

While it is clear how English colonists incorporated traditional mythical themes into their understanding of New England, it remains to be seen how those colonists viewed themselves in relation to the Native Americans they encountered. On an abstract level, New England colonists identified their own culture and that of

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[9] Bradford, 3.

[10] John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," in *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649,* eds. Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1996), 8-11.

Native Americans as polar opposites. This belief derived from Ramist logic, the predominant method of reasoning by which Puritans in New England defined most of the relationships they observed. Ramist theory, as viewed by the Puritans, postulated that all of reality was arranged in a symmetrical pattern of dichotomies. One of the distinguishing features of Ramism was the concept of "affirmative contraries," by which things were related to each other "in such a way as to be mutual causes of each other."[11] Affirmative contraries were, in fact, opposites in which each item both defined and proved the existence of the other. A subdivision of this concept was the category of "adverses." The complete opposition of the two contraries under observation distinguished a pair of adverses.[12]

It is this last category that is most relevant to a discussion of cultural relationships between English colonists and Native Americans. Settlers in New England utilized Ramist logic in defining their relation to the peoples they encountered. The resulting system of comprehension, as exhibited in colonial New England, is best described as a utilization of polar oppositional identification. As an interpretive tool, this complex was fundamental in determining the courses of action by which Puritans, individually and collectively, responded to the presence and actions of others. Colonists interpreted the cultural groupings of each population as diametrically opposite items in the pattern of reality. Thus, adherents to this ideology termed English society and culture "civilization," and that of Native Americans "savagery." For example, Roger Williams, who was much less critical of local native

[11] Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 22-23.
[12] Ibid.

culture than many of his contemporaries, drew attention to this development by criticizing his readers' persistent tendency to deny "thy brother Indian is by birth as Good. Of one blood God made Him, and Thee and All." Williams further explained that, while Native Americans had many names distinguishing one group from the other, English settlers made little of such differentiation. Williams wrote "They [Native Americans] have often asked me, why we call them Indians, Natives, etc. And understanding the reason, they will call themselves Indians, in opposition to English."[13] To the newcomers, each category, through complete opposition, defined the other. Civilization and savagery were categorical foils by which New Englanders could only understand one through its opposing relationship to the other, that is, could only understand their New England world through its relation to the New England world of Native Americans.

Mutual definition through opposition, however, did not in any way imply a level of equality between perceived subdivisions of the human race. While Ramist theory served to define reality through a symmetrical understanding of opposing dichotomies, it also clearly placed mutually defining contraries within a system of hierarchy.[14] Within the context of inter-cultural relationships in colonial New England, this line of reasoning meant that while civilization and savagery each served to illuminate the nature and characteristics of the other, the perceptional dichotomy also determined the relative superiority or inferiority of each population group. As historian Edmund S. Morgan explained in discussing the Puritan understanding of

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[13] Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, eds. John J. Teunissen and Evelyn J. Hinz (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 133 and 85.
[14] Morgan, 22.

social relationships, "God had created the world with some beings subordinate to others, he naturally proceeded upon the same principle in constructing human society." Morgan continued, "Subordination was indeed the very soul of order, and the Almighty as a God of order formed his earthly kingdom in a pattern of subordination."[15]

In documenting this English notion of societal hierarchy and subordination, a clear categorical definition of civilization developed against which foreign populations were compared. Observers predominantly based their perceptions of foreign peoples on their conformity to particular English notions of civilization, or, more commonly, the absence of such cultural elements among the examined societies. The English did not define civilization itself in abstract terms. Rather, a definition of civilization became a generalized checklist of familiar social and cultural institutions and accepted modes of behavior.

Fundamental to this concept of civilization was sedentary living based on commercial agriculture. Colonists considered settled farming communities to be the cornerstones of "proper" living and their presence or absence indicated a people's level of societal development. Likewise, for English people to consider a population on grounds comparable to their own, they must have in operation a social and political organization identifiable to the outside observers and comparable to traditional English governmental structures. Living under a relatively centralized monarchical government, English people often failed to recognize clan and tribal units as legitimate forms of governmental and social organization. Religious

[15] Ibid., 17.

composition served as a further guidepost. Colonists considered Christianity a mark of "high" civilization, although the presence of an organized religious body with a clearly structured and dogmatic belief system sufficed to propel a people at least into the beginning stages of a civilized existence. Colonial observers believed that those infrastructural foundations influenced the group identity of a people as was revealed through individual behavioral characteristics. For example, some observers thought that an adherence to English notions of proper social behavior and sexual modesty reflected a population's level of civilization. Likewise, those observers often considered written language and the possession of common English material comforts to be instrumental parts of a civilized lifestyle.[17] As will be seen, colonial migrants to New England observed oppositional points of definition in divergent notions of socio-political institutions, land use, gender roles, subsistence patterns, cultural practices, and trade relations. To English commentators, the behavior of individuals revealed the identity, level of civilization, and relative worth of the community to which they belonged.

With the opening of colonization in New England, commentators earnestly described the divergent natures of English and Native American societies. Throughout the 1620's and 1630's, accounts of Indian peoples reflected English notions of a hierarchical dichotomy of peoples, focusing on qualitative differences between civilization and savagery. In 1631, John Smith briefly noted this dichotomy

[17] Colin Calloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 79; Nicholas P. Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," in *Colonial America: Essay in Politics and Social Development*, 3rd ed., eds. Stanley Katz and John Murrin (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1987), 61-62; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 9-10.

in *Advertisements for the Planters of New England.* In listing reasons for colonization of foreign lands he noted the importance of "civilizing barbarous and inhumane Nations to civility and humanity." William Wood, one of the period's least critical observers of Native American life, noted in 1634 that while Native Americans did possess rudimentary forms of hierarchical government, "The kings had no laws to command by," and generally gained influence over their people through either fear or affection. Further, he explicitly denied the validity of their religious life when he described their "exorcisms and necromantic charms" as a form of Devil worship. Thomas Morton's 1637 observation emphasized "these salvages are found to be without Religion, Law, and King." All three commentators noted the relative absence of standard European material comforts among Native Americans and criticized perceived behavioral indiscretions.[18] As historian James Axtell noted, when Europeans observed and interpreted unfamiliar Native American social and behavioral practices, they judgmentally placed them "in mental pigeonholes constructed from ancient precedent and proximate experience." For the English colonists, this meant that the "shiny newness"[19] of the native inhabitants of New England would be compared to the time-tested, traditional beliefs and practices of England; the apparent divergence between English and Native American socio-

[18] John Smith, *Advertisements for The Planters of New England* (Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1631 and 1971), 11; William Wood, *New England's Prospect* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1634 and 1977), 97 and 101; Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1637 and 1969), 49.

[19] James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 67.

cultural manifestations marked the populations as polar opposites—as savagery and civilization.[20]

Characteristic of the seventeenth-century perceptional dichotomy between civilization and savagery was a constant dialogue concerning colonists' belief in a supposed Indian propensity for violence. To Puritan immigrants, the Indian was an unpredictable and menacing force. Fear of the savage was a pervasive theme throughout much of the early colonial literature. William Bradford expressed this fear of Indian violence, and provided a typical interpretation of the nature of the peoples of America. While discussing the many difficulties in establishing a Pilgrim colony in New England, Bradford anticipated a "continual danger of the savage people, who are cruel, barbarous, and most treacherous, being most furious in their rage, and merciless where they overcome." Further, this concern for security did not diminish following settlement and personal experience with Native Americans. In 1622, Opechancanough and Nemattanew of the Powhatan Confederacy led a devastating assault against the English colony at Jamestown in which nearly one-third of the immigrant population perished. News of the event quickly reached New England by way of a letter to Bradford from Virginia's John Hudlston. Hudlston informed Bradford of tremendous losses during this conflict and beseeched "all his good friends at Plymouth" to be wary of the Indians; he declared, "Happy is he whom other men's harms doth make to beware."[21]

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[20] L.P. Curtis, *Anglo Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Berkley, Conn: The University of Bridgeport, 1968), 7.
[21] Bradford, 26 and 110.

Plymouth colonists took this warning very seriously. The event served to reaffirm English fears of Native American violence and led to an increase in defensive military preparations. Immediately following reception of the Hudlston letter, the residents of Plymouth constructed a fortification complete with "mounted ordinance," over which an armed watch stood. Bradford explained that the colonists were in a state of "weakness and time of wants." In response to the news of the "great massacre in Virginia," the New England settlers were said to be willing to build their fort as a result of the "continual rumors of the fears from the Indians here, especially the Narragansett." In 1627, Isaac De Rasieres, a Dutch visitor to New Plymouth, described this construction; he claimed that six mounted cannons were present, and that a heavily armed unit of men under military command attended even church services there.[22]

As at Plymouth, colonists at Massachusetts Bay also evidenced this ideological interpretation of the purportedly warlike nature of Native Americans. Immigrants arriving in the colony in the 1630's expressed the same concerns over perceived Indian tendencies toward violence as did the earlier Pilgrim arrivals. Examples reaffirming this ideological commitment were widely available to the settlers, as Thomas Dudley made clear in a letter to Lady Bridget, Countess of Lincoln, dated March 12, 1631. Drawing from Edward Winslow's 1624 account in *Good News From New-England*, Dudley reported the oppression suffered by colonists at Weymouth in 1622 at the hands of Native Americans led by Chicka

[22] Isaac De Rasieres, "Untitled letter" in William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 111.

Talbott. Dudley reported that these "weak English" were relieved by Captain Wollastone and a command of thirty men who fortified a hill for their defense.[23] The significance is that some leaders in New England considered colonists who lacked armed fortifications to be weak and, therefore, vulnerable to attacks by savage Indians.

Significantly, local Native Americans themselves reinforced this animating element of polar oppositional identification through some of the accounts they related to colonists. William Wood described an account of captivity and cannibalism in his 1634 publication, *New England's Prospect.* Wood testified that a "near-neighboring Indian" who learned the story by first-hand "lamentable experience" revealed his gruesome account of Northeastern Native American adoption-sacrifice rituals to him. Taken in combat, Wood's "near-neighbor" was ritually adopted into a Mohawk community, tortured, and sentenced to death followed by consumption by his captors. The account included many examples of violence and "inhuman cruelties," which Wood ascribed to the "fierceness of their [Mohawk] natures." This depiction of traditional warfare in the region revealed the colonists' limited ability to assess Native American cultural practice. Despite Wood's familiarity with local Native Americans, he failed to comprehend the account outside of an English context. Greatly depopulated by epidemic disease and rendered militarily impotent, the Native Americans in the vicinity of the Massachusetts Bay colony faced increasing pressure from the Mohawk and from their Algonquian neighbors. In search of allies and

[23] Thomas Dudley, in *Letters from New England: The Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1629-1638,* ed. Everett Emerson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 69-70.

trading partners, these local inhabitants related such violent events to their new English neighbors. However, the ideological tools of interpretation with which the newcomers analyzed the event led Wood to believe that the Mohawk were "a cruel bloody people which were wont to come down upon their poor neighbors with more than brutish savageness."[24] Failing to recognize local antagonisms and Native American war aims and practices, Wood believed that the depicted behaviors were simply symptomatic of an Indian predilection toward unwarranted cruelty and unprovoked violence. Wood's interpretation of the information he gathered in New England both reflected ideology and simultaneously served to reaffirm English notions of civilization and group identity as defined through individual behavior.

Colonists of the 1620's and 1630's found ample evidence in support of their understanding of Indian societies and their interpretation of the meaning of New World colonization. The lengthy discussion of Native American societies in the region presented in *New England's Prospect* is in many ways an adaptation of local Indian accounts of neighboring peoples reinterpreted according to the English ideological understanding of their New World experience. Wood noted that the local Native American communities relied on English protection from neighboring tribes because of "their old soldiers being swept away by the plague." In consequence, they "do not now practice anything in martial feats worth observation." Local people related to the English the dangers they faced at the hands of traditional enemies. The English understood these accounts as evidence of the violence and savagery peculiarly inherent in Native Americans. As has been noted, both colonists and their

[24] Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 105-106; Wood, 75-77.

Indian neighbors portrayed the Mohawk and other peoples to the west in this manner. Similarly, Wood described the Tarrenteens, or Abenaki, as "little less savage and cruel than these cannibals," and that the Abenaki were the "deadly foes" of "our Indians." The Pequot to the south were said to be a "warlike people," while the Narragansett, unlike in Bradford's account, were a peaceful people. These observations can only be accurately understood when viewed in terms of two specific local experiences: the catastrophic spread of disease and the debilitating effect depopulation had on Indian military capabilities. The Mohawk, "western Indians," Pequot, and Abenaki were the local peoples' traditional enemies, and were increasingly more effective in pursuing traditional war aims against their depopulated neighbors. By contrast, these depopulated communities described the Narragansett as peaceful to the English; they were "the storehouse of all such kind of wild merchandise," and had trade agreements with the peoples in the vicinity of Massachusetts Bay.[25] Trade and alliance were connected for Native Americans in the region and, thus, it is no coincidence that the only communities not portrayed as cruel and warlike by William Wood were his immediate neighbors who were depopulated by disease, and their partners in trade and alliance. From Native American accounts of contemporary political, economic, and military circumstances in the region, colonists drew general conclusions about the purported nature of Indian peoples that supported their predetermined ideological convictions.

The perceived role of each society must be considered to understand the character of group interactivity within the confines of English ideology. The role

[25] Wood, 102 and 75-83.

colonists believed they played in their New World experiment influenced the manner in which they would interact with native peoples. Religious beliefs and identity were critical factors in determining who would migrate to the New World, and how they would interact with the Native Americans they contacted. A dominant proportion of settlers arriving in New England during the first two decades of colonization came in response to religious impulse and crusading zeal. Their religious mission was tripartite in nature: colonists sought their own salvation in the wilderness, they sought to become a corrective to religious degeneration in England and Europe, and they sought to expand the glory and dominion of their Christian God by colonizing New England.[26]

The religious motivations for migration to New England are well documented. However, the meaning of those motivations to the participants in New World colonization must be clarified. Immigration was not simply a means by which religious dissenters hoped to achieve the free practice of religion and avoid persecution. The colonists also sought a religious haven where they could more effectively serve God and achieve sanctification within the bounds of a community of their own making. For Pilgrims and Puritans, the corruption and religious degeneracy of Europe threatened their salvation. William Bradford made clear that in Europe, Satan "began to sow errors, heresies, and wonderful dissentions among the professors" of true Christian faith, "which have since been as snares to many poor

[26] Slotkin, 37-42; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 10; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1953), 4-8.

and peaceable souls."[27] Migration was seen as a means not only of escaping personal persecution, but also deleterious institutional corruptions, which led to confusion, temptation, and damnation. Here we see a connection between religious motivation and the romantic-Arcadian myth tradition. In the primitive wilderness of New England, Plymouth colonists sought to renew their spiritual condition in the absence of Old World decadence.[28]

Colonists expected that their New England experiment would serve to purify and rejuvenate the religious condition of Old England as well. Considering their homeland a corrupt and fallen realm of temptation and heresy, many settlers believed their migration would be a temporary exile during which they would purify themselves and their Church. In the process they hoped to build a utopia based on biblical law and example. This process closely correlated to the biblical precedent of the Exodus from Egypt to Israel. Like the biblical example, Puritans hoped to brave the wilderness, achieve purification, and enter a New Jerusalem. This tendency can be seen in John Winthrop's much-quoted account of Puritan utopia-building: "We shall find that the god of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when He shall make us a praise and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantations: the Lord Make it like that of New England."[29]

However, it is the third element of the colonial religious mission that most affected intercultural developments in New England and determined group identity. Colonists saw New England as a testing ground, where they strived to promote the

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[27] Bradford, 4.
[28] Slotkin, 39.
[29] Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity*, 10; Slotkin, 38-39.

glory of God and expansion of His dominion; they came to New England not only for purposes of personal salvation, but to do the work of God and spread his glory by building him an earthly kingdom based on biblical injunction. John White, an early Massachusetts Bay colonist, noted in 1630, "It is true, that all God's directions have a double scope, mans good, and Gods honor." White wrote *A Planter's Plea* to illustrate the many reasons why overseas colonization should be undertaken. The overriding theme of religious mission is made clear in the following argument:

> But that which should most sway our hearts, is the respect unto God's honor, which is much advanced by this work of replenishing the earth. First, when the largeness of his bounty is tested by settling of men in all parts of the world, whereby the extent of his munificence to the sonnes of men is discovered... Secondly, gods honor must needs be much advanced, when, together with mens persons, religion is conveyed into the several parts of the world, and all quarters of the earth found with his praise; and Christ Jesus takes in the Nations for his inheritance, and the ends of the earth for his possession, according to Gods' decree and promise.[30]

White's explication also revealed a level of millennial urgency that guided New England settlers in their contest with the wilderness. To some Puritans, the millennium was a prophesied pre-apocalyptic thousand-year period in which it was believed that Jesus Christ would return to the world to rule His earthly kingdom. White made implicit reference to this theme within the Puritan worldview. He claimed it was necessary to bring Christianity to "all quarters of the earth" in anticipation of the day in which "Christ Jesus takes in the Nations for his inheritance," according to "God's decree and promise."[31] While many immigrants to

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[30] John White, *A Planter's Plea* (Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1630 and 1968), 3-6.
[31] Ibid.

New England considered millennialism a dangerous and fanatical doctrine, a significant number of them believed in the imminence of the day of reckoning. For example, both Increase and Cotton Mather subscribed to this doctrine and discussed it with their congregants. The urgency and magnitude of this tradition added a weighty significance to New England colonization and a frenetic drive towards the establishment of the kingdom of Christ in the New World.[32]

The English ideological understanding of their world and of their New England mission inclined colonists to view their relations with Native Americans as intrinsically hostile. The various components of their worldview demanded such an interpretation. The romantic-Arcadian myth tradition taught immigrants that in the West they would need to face overwhelming peril to achieve rebirth and rejuvenation. Ramist logic led English migrants to view their society and that of Native Americans as polar opposites. Notions of social hierarchy also taught the English that their society was fundamentally superior to that of Native Americans. Meanwhile, the religious component of their ideology taught New England settlers that they were moving to the New World to establish a greater Kingdom of God. In this context, Native Americans acquired a symbolic significance for many colonists; they were the antagonists in an Arcadian quest, a foil for notions of superior civilization, and impediments to the furtherance of God's dominion.

The symbolic understanding of Native Americans led colonists to believe that Indians were, in fact, the agents of Satan and that their conflict with the English was

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[32] Perry Miller, 185-190; J.F. Maclear, "New England and the Fifth Monarchy: The Quest for the Millennium in Early American Puritanism," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 32, no. 2 (April 1975), 223-260.

the living manifestation of the Devil's age-old war against God.[33] In seventeenth-century English ideology, civilization and Christianity were intimately associated; they were inseparably connected concepts. Therefore, the interpretive reliance on oppositional identification demanded that Native American society was, by definition, the antithesis of Christian civilization. This interconnection between civilization and Christianity prevented English colonists from recognizing the validity of Native American social and cultural traditions, while simultaneously demonizing all elements of native culture.[34] As Francis Jennings explained, "what Europeans saw of Indian religion passed through refracting and filtering lenses of preconceptions formed and crystallized in the propaganda of aggressive expansion."[35] Despite Jennings' dismissal of the ideological underpinnings of colonial society as mere propaganda, he was correct in asserting that colonists tended to misinterpret Native American social and cultural institutions and behavioral tendencies. These misinterpretations reinforced the polar civilization-savagery dichotomy; in this latter context, the "refracting and filtering lenses of preconception" magnified the inclination to see evil and devil-worship in Native American religious expressions. Thus, Indian identity, as defined by the English through ideology, was determined

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[33] Johnson, 111-112; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 43 and 46-48; Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 22; Alden T. Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 179.

[34] Roy Harvey Pearce, "The 'Ruines of Mankind': The Indian and the Puritan Mind," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 13, no. 2 (April 1952), 210-212; William S. Simmons, "Cultural Bias in the New England Puritans' Perception of Indians," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 38, no. 1 (January 1981), 58; Berkhofer, 16.

[35] Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 45.

expressly in relationship to a prescribed religious mission and the ideal of Puritan identity.

For example, numerous Native American communities in New England believed that their gods used dreams and visions to communicate with people. Shamans and powwows who experienced the supernatural through this medium were greatly respected and honored in their communities. Some New England peoples believed that a spirit, called Hobbamock, representing the "disembodied souls of the dead," was able to enter the bodies of powwows for such protective and divining purposes. Groups also participated in ceremonies designed to generate a collective experience of supernatural vision. Further, people considered the messages they received in these ways to be authoritative, and they often guided individual and group action. English observers were unable to recognize these ceremonies as legitimate and had tremendous difficulty in accepting validity in direct revelation by God or gods to individuals. Rather, they assumed the ceremonies were satanic rituals, that Hobbamock was the Devil, and that the shamans and powwows were witches. John Eliot elucidated this common interpretive device in *Indian Dialogues.* Eliot described the activities of Piumbukhou, a proselytizing native convert. In an attempt to convert his kinsmen to the Christian faith, the neophyte explained, "Your prayers and powwowings are worshipping of the Devil, and not of God, and they are among the

greatest of your sins."[36] Historian William Simmons referred to this development as the "Puritan commitment to the devil-and-witchcraft theory of Indian culture."[37]

The migrants' emphasis on the incompatibility and contrariness of English and Native American religions revealed the exclusionary and definitional elements of polar oppositional identification. There was no middle ground for identity. As far as colonists were concerned, the terms Indian and English stood on opposite sides of an either/or equation. And while the barrier between these two categories was permeable, identity transformation was difficult and had to be complete. Simply accepting the Christian faith or a few superficial cultural characteristics would not change a Native American into an Englishperson. The metamorphosis had to be all-encompassing: religious, cultural, social, economic, and ideological understandings all had to be drastically changed to conform to the English model, and had to be evidenced through the individual's personal behavior.

Because identification was based on opposition and relative worth, Indian and English were defined not simply by the cultural elements each group displayed, but also by selective elements of the other's culture that were not displayed in their own. For example, in one account of Puritan proselytizing, the praying Indian Waban claimed that finding Christ "repenteth me of all my fore-past life" which "are now bitter as gall unto me," and pleaded with his kinsman Peneovot, "Forsake your old ways of sin, of which you have cause to be ashamed, and turn unto God." Peneovot's very revealing response was that he had "heard of this business of praying to God . . .

[36] John Eliot, *Indian Dialogues*, in *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction*, eds. Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980), 88.
[37] Simmons, 56 and 60-61.

It changes men, and advances them into a condition above other men." For a Native American to cross the identity barrier was, indeed, to engage in a reverse-transmogrification by which the degraded and dehumanized savage must abandon all his "filth and folly" and "all the evil actions that are wont to be done in the dark." To be English in New England was, by definition, not to be Indian. Eliot's *Indian Dialogues* shed considerable light on this development; when Piumbukhou, a second Indian convert, was asked by his kinsmen to attend a "great dancing, and sacrifice, and play," his response was that he "cannot serve two masters" and had "undertaken and promised to serve God, and . . . cannot now go back again and serve the Devil." Further, Piumbukhou described the common social and religious gathering as a "deep pit and filthy puddle," and claimed that attending the festivity would make him "utterly . . . disabled, if [he] should go in [him]self, and so be defiled with the same filth . . . ."[38] In these examples, cultural manifestations were the basis of Indian and colonial identities.

The hostile elements of English-Native American cultural interactions can also be seen as a manifestation of the Puritan drive for regeneration. Superficially, Puritans viewed their attacks on Indian culture and political autonomy as attacks on Satan and advancement for Christian civilization. Internally, violence against Native Americans was an attack on subconscious fears of sin, damnation, and degeneration.[39] For colonists, the North American wilderness and its native inhabitants were

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[38] Eliot, 96-96 and 64-65.

[39] James Axtell, "The Scholastic Philosophy of the Wilderness," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 29, no. 3 (July 1972), 336 and 352-353; James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 32, no. 1 (January 1975), 56; Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery—American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), 90.

symbolic of their own perceived transgressions against God. As Richard Slotkin explained, "the Indians were emblems of external temptation to sin or of the human mind's dark impulses to sin."[40] Voluntarily exiled from England, isolated in an alien wilderness, and surrounded by sin and temptation, colonists' fears and anxieties were often assuaged by recourse to violence. Violence was a symbolic means of advancing civilization, maintaining self-identity, and alleviating fears of damnation. In this way, hostile and violent intercultural exchanges were a way of achieving regeneration through violence for many New England settlers.[41]

[40] Slotkin, 40.
[41] Ibid., 5, 17-18, 179.

# CHAPTER 2

## THE INDIAN WORLD

Considerable attention has been given to detailing images of the New World, and to explaining the parameters and ramifications of English ideological traditions. The impact of those ideological impulses on historical developments can be further explained through an examination of more tangible circumstances and the details of intercultural relations in New England during the colonial period. Despite self-imposed pressure to maintain cultural identity, colonists and their leaders learned that adaptation to agricultural, economic, diplomatic, and military practices in native New England was essential to successful colonial development. In New Plymouth, however, colonists rapidly discovered that adapting to an Indian world while maintaining cultural identity was a difficult prospect. For the first two decades of the Plymouth experience, survival and economic self-sufficiency were tenuous. What colonists expected to find in the New World did not always correspond with what, in fact, they discovered. The people Plymouth colonists thought would be savages in the wilderness turned out to be dynamic members of a resilient Indian civilization. Despite demographic disaster among Indian communities following contact and English misperceptions about the nature of those societies, long-standing Native American economic, political, and military traditions continued to dominate New England until well after initial colonization. As Plymouth colonists adapted to the Indian world of New England, some colonial leaders believed their cultural integrity

came into question. As the New Plymouth community became increasingly integrated into the economic and diplomatic world of their Native American neighbors, those leaders increasingly questioned the identity of their own communities, magnifying the oppositional trends within their ideological understandings of the colonial venture. The realities of life in Indian New England, and Pilgrim adaptations to those realities, then, were a major mechanism in colonial ideological formation following 1620. The subsistence, settlement, trade, and diplomatic patterns established in Native American New England provided the context within which Plymouth society developed. English interpretations of the meaning of adaptation to those patterns revealed the continuing evolution of oppositional ideology, English concern over a crisis of communal identity, and the key to cultural interaction during the initial decades of colonization.

Mobility and seasonal migration based on a diversified economy characterized Native American life along the east coast of North America. Native American families and village units migrated over relatively large territorial tracts in successful efforts to maximize the productivity of the environments in which they lived. Through a combination of temporary dispersal into smaller family units and task-specific groups, followed by the reassembly of these groups into larger village units, Native Americans maximized the productive potential of New England through seasonally based agriculture, hunting, fishing, and gathering. As William Cronon explained in *Changes in the Land*, "Indian communities had learned to exploit the

seasonal diversity of their environment by practicing mobility: their communities characteristically refused to stay put."[1]

Hunter-gatherer populations in northern New England pursued one specific version of such migratory economic activities. During the spring and early summer, many of those groups migrated to seashore and river locations in pursuit of fish and other aquatic wild life. Men typically engaged in fishing, while women gathered shellfish and captured migratory birds. By late summer or early fall, groups migrated to more wooded areas where women collected nuts, berries, and other forest products while men hunted large game animals. The winter months were spent in a similar fashion, with men pursuing game and women transporting and processing meats and furs.[2]

In southern New England, Native American populations pursued a more semi-sedentary seasonal lifestyle. For such societies, spring was a time for preparing and planting crop fields. Summer months saw migration from planted areas in pursuit of hunting, fishing, and gathering activities. The fall season brought a return migration for harvest. Late fall and winter was a hunting season in which groups typically broke up into smaller contingents in pursuit of game animals; the fall hunt was similar to the practices of peoples in northern New England.[3]

Throughout these seasonal migrations, a gender-based system of production characterized Native American life. Distinct methods of land use and complementary

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[1] Cronon, 37-38; Jean O'Brien, "'They are so frequently shifting their place of residence': Land and the Construction of Social Place of Indians in Colonial Massachusetts," in *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850*, eds. Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 206-207.
[2] Cronon, 39-40.
[3] Ibid., 43-48.

gender roles were reflective of this system of production. Women were responsible for planting, harvesting, the processing of game, and the preparatory processes for migration, fishing, and food storage. Men, like their northern counterparts, were primarily responsible for hunting activities. Native American women and men both interacted with the environments through which they migrated with burning techniques designed to facilitate both farming and hunting. Indians developed productive farming areas by using fire to burn away forest debris and underbrush. Further, Indians applied more extensive burning activities to heavily wooded regions to encourage the development of hedge or boundary areas. In these areas, the growth of various grasses replaced forest underbrush. Various game animals flourished in such altered environments, providing a more reliable means of subsistence for Native Americans. A unique relationship between environment, land use, and gender roles characterized Native American economies.[4]

Maize agriculture and mixed-field farming practices were critical to the annual subsistence cycles of many southern New England Indians. While wild game and plant products remained an important component of Native American diets, many New England groups were significantly reliant on the production of maize, beans, squash, and other native cultigens in mixed agricultural fields. Neal Salisbury, basing his figures on M. K. Bennett's reconstruction of seventeenth-century Indian consumption patterns, asserted that agricultural produce was by far the most important element of Native American diets. Bennett and Salisbury agreed that up to

[4] Ibid., 49-51.

65 percent of average annual food intake was comprised of corn and other native grain products.[5]

In *Native People of Southern New England,* Kathleen J. Bragdon added considerable complexity to the pictures of Indian agricultural and subsistence patterns presented by M. K. Bennett, William Cronon, and Neal Salisbury. Bragdon presented a tripartite settlement model for southern New England in which distinct estuarine, riverine, and uplands ecosystems determined the character of Indian settlement patterns and subsistence cycles. Estuarine peoples relied predominantly on the abundant plant and animal food resources of their unique coastal ecosystem. A sedentary pattern of settlement was practiced with estuaries themselves providing the geographical focus of communities. Agricultural products comprised a smaller portion of their annual diets, though maize was a significant food source in areas where population began to outstrip an ecosystems carrying capacity. By contrast, sedentary riverine populations relied heavily on agriculture for their subsistence. Riverine communities were village-based and their annual subsistence patterns most closely resembled William Cronon and Neal Salisbury's depictions of seasonal migratory subsistence cycles. Bragdon's description of uplands populations depicted more mobile populations that were reliant on neither village-based settlement patterns nor agriculture.[6]

According to Bragdon, Native American groups in coastal southern New England exhibited a distinct pattern of settlement and subsistence activities that

[5] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 31-32; Salisbury's figures are based on M.K. Bennett, "The Food Economy of the New England Indians, 1605-75," *Journal of Political Economy* 63 (1955), 369-387.
[6] Bragdon, 55-59 and 71-79.

maximized the region's food producing potential in support of large populations. Unlike Dean R. Snow, who failed to recognize a causal relationship between population pressure and the adoption of agriculture, Bragdon detailed a relationship between the two processes, adopting a schema which modified Ester Boserup's "model of agricultural development."[7] Coastal regions' resources supported larger populations, independent of horticulture. As communities grew beyond the carrying capacity of the ecosystems in which they developed, they adopted agriculture within the context of pre-existing social and ecological conditions. As such, Native American communities within the Cape Cod region depended on agricultural "food-producing strategies," although the adoption of agriculture was more recent and the reliance on agricultural produce was somewhat less pronounced than in riverine populations such as those of the Connecticut River Valley.[8]

Bragdon's "modified Boserupian model" illustrated a distinct settlement and agricultural pattern reflective of circumstances in coastal southern New England during the opening half of the seventeenth century. Archaeological evidence revealed that by 1300 A.D., communities around Cape Cod began to disperse into individual households. Those agricultural units were occupied throughout the year and were surrounded by fields and storage facilities. Maize agriculture was widespread. In time, the scarcity of arable land was problematic. Indians relied on the permanent, independent farm household as the primary unit of production. The permanent use of crop fields was evident as was an intensification of labor demands. This pattern was

[7] Bragdon, 85; Snow, 19-20; Ester Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965).
[8] Bragdon, 85-86.

well established by the time of the Pilgrim arrival in 1620; it was the primary model of settlement and subsistence observed by colonists in the Indian world of southern New England.[9]

Like Native American settlement and subsistence patterns, an Indian trade model developed prior to European arrival in southern New England and continued to function following the establishment of the Plymouth colony. Existing Native American trade systems facilitated individuals in their pursuit of political authority. Trade in North America was traditionally engaged in for economic, social, and political purposes. Commercial gain was not the primary focus of such activity. Rather, trade frequently took the form of gift giving in which the free exchange of items was used to develop reciprocal relations of obligation. An individual's ability to transfer gift items to others won him respect and authority within his immediate kinship group and village. Gift giving also took on a diplomatic form when used to cement inter-group alliances and obligations. Traditional Native American trade systems were thus geared toward generating political power by generating obligatory relationships of reciprocal exchange. Gift giving was an elemental component of a Native American status system in which individuals or groups could generate tangible political power through the exchange of prestige items.[10]

Plymouth colonists entered an economic world in the early 1620's that reflected this system of trade reciprocity. Additionally, settlers found it necessary to engage within the context of a pre-existing trade system linking farming and hunting

[9] Ibid., 85-91.
[10] Cronon, 92.

populations across the agricultural divide. Centuries-old trade patterns linked the Indians of southern New England to other Native American groups throughout the region. One of the more fundamental long-distance trade patterns was an exchange of agricultural produce from southern horticulturalists for game products from northern hunters residing in latitudes less suitable to farming. As William Cronon asserted, this trade pattern reflected the ecological circumstances of the region. Each population group exchanged local surpluses for goods produced in greater quantities elsewhere. Such goods included agricultural crops, fur products, and both European and Native American produced trade goods. Hunting populations such as the Micmac and Abenaki traded their more abundant supply of thick northern furs for surplus maize and beans of southern peoples. The maize-for-furs exchange was the major trade link between northern and southern populations. The introduction of European goods and technologies into the northeast magnified the importance of this trade connection as northern populations became more specialized hunter/trappers and, thus, more reliant on southern food products.[11]

The trade dynamic was neither new at the time of Plymouth's establishment nor unique to New England. Archaeological evidence indicated the existence of extensive prehistoric trade networks connecting southern New England to population groups throughout the northeast. The presence of non-local ceramics, lithics, and copper items revealed many of the contours of trade patterns prior to European colonization in North America. Additionally, the discovery of European-made trade goods in Native American dig sites dating from as early as the twelfth and thirteenth

[11] Cronon, 92-94; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 56-57.

centuries revealed the existence of an extensive north-south exchange system predating the English arrival in New England by as much as five centuries.[12] By the 1620's, the trade network between agricultural and hunting populations in New England was well established. Further, historian Bruce G. Trigger established the existence of this trade dynamic across the agricultural divide throughout the Northeast. Like the New England populations, the Huron populations of the Great Lakes region experienced a similar "symbiotic relationship with the northern hunting peoples" that predated European arrival.[13]

The sachemship embodied the intricate connection between trade and diplomacy among Native Americans in seventeenth-century New England. In coastal New England especially, Indian political leaders, or sachems were "associated with specific territories." With the advice and consent of community elders and leaders called "principle men" and the approval of the "common people," sachems were responsible for the allocation of land, the redistribution of tribute, diplomatic affairs with neighboring peoples, and the dispensation of justice within their territories. The significance of the sachem's role within a community was magnified during the early colonial period as a result of increased territoriality among Indian peoples. Connected to access to trade goods and local resources, territoriality enhanced the role of sachem as inter-group mediator.[14]

Sachems collected "taxes" in the form of gifts and services from people within his or her community and tribute from dependent neighbors. Unlike Salisbury, who

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[12] Bragdon, 91-92.
[13] Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 168-176.
[14] Bragdon, 140-146 and 95-96.

believed these goods were primarily redistributed within a community to enhance the power of the sachem and ensure community cohesion, Bragdon accepted that tax goods were more frequently used in trade and as diplomatic gifts to maintain alliances and ensure community autonomy. Significantly, exchange of such goods was linked to military protection. Protection was offered to a sachem's tributary neighbors in exchange for respect and symbolic submission, and goods and services. Further, the reciprocal exchange of goods between allied communities was a tool for the maintenance of peaceful and cooperative relations. Dominant sachems acquired a status of defender and advocate for subordinate communities, and mediator between neighboring peoples and communities within their territories. The authority of the sachemship increased as territoriality grew in importance and warfare became more endemic during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[15]

Epidemic disease put considerable strain on Indian life ways, a factor greatly affecting intercultural relations between Native Americans and English immigrants. Native Americans proved to be particularly susceptible to foreign disease during the colonial period, a development that dramatically influenced all areas of interaction between native peoples and English colonists.[16] Long centuries of isolation from the peoples of Eurasia and Africa left Native Americans inordinately vulnerable to epidemic disease. Native Americans failed to transport many Old World diseases to North America during their prehistoric migrations across the Bering land bridge generations prior to the period of colonial contact. Further, a combination of low

[15] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 47; Bragdon, 147-155.
[16] Cronon, 85.

population density, an absence of disease-carrying domesticated livestock, and the lengthy inhabitation of a semi-arctic region inhospitable to many common pathogens during that migratory period helped to filter out deadly illnesses among the early Native American populations.[17] In consequence, Native Americans did not develop and maintain acquired immunities to Old World diseases. Untouched by these epidemics for generations, peoples of the Americas were unprotected by biologically transmitted antibodies. The effect was to produce population groups in which the fatality and transmission rates for such diseases were extraordinarily high. Historian Alfred W. Crosby termed such phenomena "virgin soil epidemics" and further illustrated their effects by explaining, "the initial appearance of these diseases is as certain to have set off deadly epidemics as dropping lighted matches into tinder is certain to cause fires."[18]

The arrival in North America of Old World pathogens certainly ignited a flash-fire of epidemics. During the colonial period, Native American communities experienced rapid depopulation and social disruption. By the time English colonists began to arrive on the eastern seaboard of North America in the seventeenth century, such epidemics had already disrupted many native populations. From 1616 through 1619, an epidemic killed roughly nine out of every ten infected Native Americans along the coastal regions between Cape Cod and Maine. Edward Johnson later explained in *Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour*, that disease had wracked the native population, "chiefly devastating those places where the English afterward

[17] Ibid.
[18] Alfred W. Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," in *Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development*, 4th ed., ed. Stanley N. Katz, John M. Murrin, and Douglas Greenberg (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 4-9.

planted the Country." Johnson claimed that the Massachusetts people were "more especially" affected, and that entire families were "smitten." Simultaneously, many of the survivors fled areas where "their Wigwams lie full of dead Corpes."[19] Similarly devastating epidemics recurred throughout New England during the 1630's and 1640's. Traditional treatments for disease such as the use of sweathouses and practices by which relatives gathered about the beds of the sick served only to increase the transfer of deadly epidemics.[20] The death rate of Native American communities infected by Old World diseases during the colonial period may have been as high as 90 percent.[21]

Epidemic disease and the astronomical death rate associated with it served to reaffirm English ideological convictions about their mission in the New World. From the perspective of colonial observers, God had cleared the land of its savage inhabitants to make room for civilized Christendom. As late as 1630, John White noted a colonial interpretation of disease much commented on during the preceding decade: "the Land affords void ground enough to receive more people then this State can spare . . .which comes to pass by the desolation happening through a three years Plague." Thomas Morton more specifically related the apparently divine role disease played in assisting English colonization. Morton wrote, "And the bones and skulls upon the several places of their [Native American] habitations, made such a spectacle after my coming into those parts, that as I travailed in the Forest, near the Massachusetts, it seemed to me a new found Golgotha." Morton's attribution of

[19] Johnson, 16-17.
[20] Crosby, 11; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 34-35.
[21] Crosby, 5-7.

significance to the event read as, "And by this means there is as yet but a small number of Savages in New England to that, which hath been in former time, and the place is made so much the more fit, for the English Nation to inhabit in, and erect in it Temples to the glory of God."[22]

When New Plymouth was founded in 1620 the colony's leaders brought with them a distinct ideology that they believed would be the theoretical basis on which their society would be formed. Two fundamental aspects of that ideology influenced the development of the colony: Plymouth leaders used their ideology to envision the creation of a utopian Separatist community defined by an ideal communal identity, and Pilgrim elites based their understanding of Native Americans on the oppositional elements of their worldview. Yet when Bradford and his compatriots arrived at New Plymouth, Indian New England did not entirely conform to elite notions of Native American identity. Rather than finding savage, disorganized, and static societies, Plymouth colonists discovered a versatile and dynamic culture group practicing traditions and life ways that had developed over centuries. Despite epidemic disease and depopulation during the early seventeenth century, Indians of New England continued to draw on their own cultural precedents in structuring their politics, social life, and economic practices. Native Americans developed subsistence patterns based on a combination of hunting, gathering, and agriculture. Seasonal mobility characterized Indian subsistence, yet concepts of territoriality and inter-group boundaries existed. Native Americans practiced trade within an intraregional system based on the north-south maize-for-furs exchange. Native Americans based their

[22] White, 25; Morton, 23-24.

societies on kinship networks and relied on the leadership abilities of sachems to regulate affairs both within and between communities. Rather than finding primitive peoples aimlessly wandering a North American wilderness, Plymouth settlers contacted resilient Indian societies in firm possession of the lands they occupied. By the early seventeenth century, epidemic disease dramatically depopulated the region of many of its native inhabitants. Yet Plymouth leaders found they had to come to terms with living in a region dominated by Indian peoples. The ways in which colonists adapted to Indian New England aggravated elite notions of identity and profoundly influenced the development of Plymouth society in the 1620's and 1630's.

# CHAPTER 3

## COLONIAL ADAPTATIONS AND A CRISIS OF COMMUNAL IDENTITY

For the first two decades of the Plymouth experience, survival and economic self-sufficiency were tenuous. Colonists discovered an Indian world far different than the one they expected. Despite demographic disaster among Indian communities following contact and English misperceptions about the nature of those societies, long-standing Native American economic, political, and military traditions continued to dominate New England until well after initial colonization. Regardless of elite pressure to maintain cultural identity, colonists and their leaders learned that adaptation to Native American agricultural, economic, and diplomatic practices in New England was necessary to successfully build a viable colony. Colonial leaders, however, rapidly discovered that adapting to an Indian world while maintaining cultural identity was a difficult prospect. Some colonial leaders believed that adaptation and diplomatic integration threatened cultural integrity and destroyed their ideal of communal identity. As the New Plymouth community became increasingly integrated into the economic and diplomatic world of Native Americans, those leaders increasingly questioned the identity of their own communities, magnifying the oppositional trends within their ideological understandings of the colonial enterprise. Economic and diplomatic integration between Indian peoples and the Plymouth colony fostered, despite elite concerns, social integration and personal familiarity between peoples across the cultural divide. Colonial leaders remained unable to

successfully implement segregationist policies throughout the 1620's and 1630's, and they remained incapable of eliminating an Indian presence in the region. Unable to eliminate social integration between English and Indian peoples and concerned about the possibly degenerative effects of contact with a culturally divergent people, Plymouth officials tried to maintain communal identity through the regulation of colonists' behavior. The Plymouth elite suffered a crisis of communal identity and sought to preserve their vision of a utopian society by repressing improper behavior among colonists. To Plymouth leaders, the Indian threat became not merely one of violence, but of influence. Unable to remove the Indian influence, those leaders hoped to preserve communal identity by forcing colonists to adhere to behavioral norms and standards.

English colonization of northeastern North America must be considered in light of the biological and demographic consequences of epidemic disease. The horrific death rates among Native American communities during the epidemics of 1616 and 1619 provided prospective settlers with an access point to the mainland. Pilgrim immigrants capitalized on this development and founded Plymouth colony in 1620. Puritan colonists soon followed, entering the Massachusetts Bay area in 1629 and 1630. Contention between Native Americans and colonists was neither systematic nor pervasive when European settlement of the region began. Disease-related depopulation temporarily limited possible issues of English land encroachment, while encouraging amicable inter-group relations for mutual benefit between colonists and some Native American communities. Edward Johnson claimed that disease, divinely wrought, had "not only made room for his [Christ's]

people to plant; but also tamed the hard and cruel hearts of these barbarous Indians." Consequently, "half a handful of his [Christ's] people landing not long after in Plimoth-Plantation, found little resistance." Further, an English bent towards conflict and conquest was, temporarily, not apparent. While concerned for their own welfare, colonists claimed they "more thirsted after their [Indian's] conversion than destruction . . . and also knew well without commerce with them they [colonists] were not like long to subsist."[1] Rather, the weakening of Native American communities afforded colonists the opportunity to enter the region and begin a process of adaptation to Indian ways and the American environment. In the process, Plymouth leaders became increasingly concerned about the behavior of colonists and the possible ramifications of adaptation to Indian New England on communal identity. During the 1620's and 1630's, colonial elites unsuccessfully sought to enforce social segregation between settlers and Indians and, failing in that endeavor, to enforce standards of behavior to preserve the group identity of the Plymouth community.

In light of the evidence, it is erroneous to trivialize the consequences of ideology and to dismiss it as mere propaganda or justification for conquest. For example, Francis Jennings's scathing account of this period, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*, accurately portrayed many elements of this belief system, while simultaneously dismissing it altogether: "All of these floundering attempts at explanation only serve to obscure the essential fact that the civilized-uncivilized distinction is a moral sanction rather than any given

[1] Johnson, 17-18.

combination of social traits susceptible to objective definition." Jennings further explained that English ideology was "a weapon of attack rather than a standard of measurement."[2] Mistaking causality of conflict for justification, or "moral sanction," Jennings overlooked the complexity of both Native American and English colonial societies and heritages. What Jennings failed to realize is that polar oppositional identification was a pervasive tool of interpretation among Pilgrim leaders. Plymouth elites drew on long-evolving ideological traditions; they hoped this interpretive method would facilitate the utopian development of English immigrant society and culture. While ultimately encouraging militarization and contentiousness, these beliefs must be considered more reflections of a fear of cultural degeneration than a superficial pretext for conquest. And while there is no doubt that English migrants eventually sought to eradicate native culture and subject America's earlier inhabitants to their sovereign rule, it would be utterly fallacious to dismiss the evidence of causal ideology as a mere excuse to legitimize an English drive for military domination, land, and extermination.

On the contrary, despite apprehension and sporadic episodes of violence, both the English and their immediate Native American neighbors made efforts to incorporate the other within familiar contexts and to encourage and maintain peaceful relationships.[3] Some English leaders remained committed to a belief in Indian savagery and feared, as was the case for the Pilgrims in Holland, that exposure to a divergent culture would produce degenerative effects on their society and identity.

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[2] Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 8.
[3] Kupperman, 174-211

Nonetheless, those leaders also believed that adaptation to the political and demographic circumstances of native New England was both necessary and beneficial. Plymouth officials thus developed mechanisms by which to interact with their new neighbors. For example, Bradford described the formation of an alliance between Pilgrim colonists and Wampanoag Indians led by Massasoit. The participants achieved an alliance of mutual support following a gift-giving exchange designed to generate reciprocal group relations. Both groups hoped to prevent violent encounters between each other and to prevent theft. Further, each group considered subjecting transgressors of this relationship to the justice of the afflicted party. Members of each group resided with the other so as to guarantee this agreement. Additionally, both parties were obligated to aid each other in war. However, the relationship was a guarded alliance in that the final contingency of the agreement stipulated that both parties visit each other unarmed.[4] This final stipulation is most significant in that it revealed mutual concerns and qualified access to and mobility within both Indian and English settlements. Karen Kupperman, in *Indians and English,* noted a lack of race-based prejudice against Native Americans in the early colonial period; she further concluded that this was evidence of a lack of "exclusionary thinking."[5] Yet the conditions of interaction, as here evidenced, were in fact exclusionary. Plymouth leaders pursued economic and diplomatic accommodation, yet shunned social and cultural integration of peoples. Restrictions on mobility and interaction clearly illustrated residual concerns derived from the

[4] Bradford, 81; Dwight B. Heath, ed., *A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth: Mourt's Relation* (New York: Corinth Books, 1963), 56-57.
[5] Kupperman, 75; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 115.

oppositional manner of English systems of identification and Native American wariness of Europeans. While peace and mutual aid were both acceptable and desirable, trust and efforts to integrate divergent cultural groups were conspicuously absent.

During the early years of colonization, Plymouth leaders encouraged diplomatic integration with Native American peoples to ensure the survival of their own community. Ideological convictions of the Pilgrim elite, however, encouraged a desire for social segregation between Indians and settlers. Yet social integration accompanied insertion into the world of Native American politics. The 1621 exchange of hostages between Plymouth and the Wampanoag to cement their alliance revealed this tendency. While concerned with the plantations' survival and security in 1621, Plymouth leaders remained less willing to enforce social segregation at the price of diplomatic animosity. In 1621, Pilgrim commentators noted that Massasoit's "people came very often, and very many together unto us, bringing for the most part their wives and children with them." Plymouth officials fully realized that political and social intermixing was intertwined in native New England. In response, Pilgrim leaders sought to maintain their diplomatic connection to the Wampanoag while limiting social interaction on a pretext. Less than a year after agreeing to the alliance with Massasoit's people, Plymouth officials sent the Wampanoag leader a copper chain to be used as a pass of entry into the plantation by official messengers from the sachem. Plymouth leaders claimed they had not the food resources to entertain Indian visitors. In this way, Plymouth elites sheepishly attempted to maintain diplomatic

standing in Indian New England, while limiting social interaction between English and Native American peoples.[6]

Diplomatic integration into the world of Native America was crucial to the successful establishment and continued viability of New England colonies. In some regard, that process was typical of English colonization in North America. For example, James H. Merrell illustrated the complex in "The Indians' New World: The Catawba Experience." In discussing the effects of European expansion on Indians of the American southeast, Merrell revealed three distinct stages of colonization. During the first stage, disease-related depopulation devastated Native American communities. The second stage was characterized by the formation of commercial relations between Indians and non-permanent European traders. During the final stage, permanent "settlers eager to develop land" replaced traders. Significantly, Merrell argued that the Catawba and other Indian groups "were forced to blend old and new in ways that would permit them to survive in the present without forsaking their past." In the Plymouth and later Massachusetts Bay examples of the 1620's and 1630's, Merrell's third stage of colonization was underway.[7]

Like the Catawba, Indians of southern New England transformed old and new practices and conditions to adapt to a changing demographic and political circumstance. However, it is equally important that English colonists engaged in the same process of adaptation. Settlers, too, had to "redefine the meaning of the term stranger and transform outsiders into insiders." As in the Southeast, New England's

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[6] Heath, 61.

[7] James H. Merrell, "The Indians' New World: The Catawba Experience" in *American Encounters: Native and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850*, eds. Peter C. Mancall and James H. Merrell (New York: Routledge, 2000), 28.

Algonquian peoples "dictate[d] the terms of trade . . . compel[ed] visitors . . . to abide by aboriginal codes of conduct," and played "one colony's traders against the other to ensure an abundance of goods at favorable rates." Under these conditions, Plymouth and Bay settlers adopted Indian economic and diplomatic systems and adapted to Indian trade patterns. Yet, unlike the English in the Southeast, elite Pilgrim-Puritan identity concerns prevented acceptance of pervasive social and cultural intermingling and adaptation, a development which, during the opening decades, prevented the formation of a "new intercourse . . . based not on suspicion and an expectation of conflict but on trust and a measure of friendship."[8] The new order Plymouth leaders hoped to establish in New England was an insertion into Native American economics and politics. Colonists sought out cooperative trade and economic relationships and political alliances in relative conformity with Native American diplomatic practices, yet not at the cost of cultural change. The practice Plymouth leaders hoped to implement was one of infrastructural integration into native New England without cultural change or a compromise of identity.

Plymouth colonists of the early 1620's displayed behavior revealing the distinction between diplomatic and social integration. Until Massasoit's intervention and the formation of a Plymouth-Wampanoag alliance in March 1621, interaction between the English and Native Americans was tense and occasionally violent. Plymouth and Wampanoag leaders achieved a level of political cooperation with the alliance, an event that integrated the colonial community into the native New England political system. Indian "outsiders," however, had become more associates than

[8] Ibid., 32, 36, and 40.

"insiders." Even following the 1621 treaty of alliance, Pilgrim mistrust of Indians remained widespread, and colony leaders discouraged personal cross-cultural interactions among non-elite members of the community. Intimate intercultural relations were frowned upon. In 1623, Bradford, having responded to a food crisis and rumors of an Indian conspiracy faced by Thomas Weston's settlers at Wessagusset, condemned overly-close intercultural relationships. Bradford was stunned by close working and living conditions between colonists and Native Americans, the appearance of inter-racial sexual relations, and the integration of English peoples into Indian society.[9] As in other colonies, the Plymouth courts reinforced social and cultural segregation by using Native Americans to return escaped servants. For example, in 1633, an Indian "forced" servant Thomas Brian "to return" to the colony. A Manomet Indian named Penwatechet returned escapee William Mendlove to his master, William Palmer, that same year.[10]

Nor was this exclusionary and oppositional manner of behavior unique to the Pilgrim vanguard of New England settlement. The Puritan settlers of Massachusetts Bay evidenced an identical system of interpretation and a remarkably similar pattern of interactive regulation. On March 1, 1631, a Massachusetts Court initially forbade the use of Native Americans as servants in English households. On June 5, 1632, the Bay made restrictions on Indian mobility and trade rights within the colony when the Court of Assistants ordered that "there shall be a trucking house appointed in every plantation, where the Indians may resort to trade, to avoid there coming to several

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[9] Bradford, 80-85 and 115-119.

[10] Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, in New England*, vol. 1 (Boston: Press of W. White, 1855), 7 and 15.

houses." And on October 6, 1634, Clement Briggs was fined for "entertaining an Indian" without specific Court permission; the Court also demanded Briggs desist in maintaining such illegal association and immediately "discharge himself of him [the Indian in question]."[11]

Despite cultural exclusivity, New England's immigrant societies adapted to Native American political realities, enmeshing themselves within the Indian world of diplomacy. The initial experiences of Plymouth colonists illustrated the need for insertion into the pre-existing fabric of Indian politics and foreign affairs. The colony's military vulnerability necessitated the founding of peaceful working relations with local Native Americans. As has been noted, oppositional ideology encouraged apprehension of Indian motives and designs even prior to settlement.

Pilgrim observations of their new neighbors upon entry into New England reinforced their ideological commitments. Initial exploration of Cape Cod in 1620 encouraged hostilities. Captain Miles Standish led an exploratory expedition of sixteen well-armed men along the coast. Along the way the Plymouth group frightened local Indians, raided stores of agricultural produce, and provoked an Indian counter raid. Beginning in November of that year, local Indians harassed expeditions with retaliatory surprise attacks, against which Pilgrim firearms had only limited effect.[12] By the 11th of November the colonists agreed to meet and consult "of laws

[11] Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, Vol. 1 (Boston: W. White, 1853), 83, 87, 96, and 132.
[12] Bradford, 64-70.

and orders, both for their civil and military government as the necessity of their condition did require."[13]

The immediate commencement of Indian-colonist hostilities prompted the colony to enter into diplomatic agreements with their neighbors along established Native American patterns. On March 16, Samoset, an English-speaking Indian, approached the Pilgrims. Samoset "became profitable to them in acquainting them with many things concerning the state of the country in the east parts where he lived . . . as also of the people here, of their names, number and strength, of their situation and distance from this place, and who was chief amongst them."[14] Having acquainted the settlers with the demographic and political circumstances of the region, Samoset then arranged a diplomatic exchange between Plymouth and the Wampanoag sachem, Massasoit. Arriving with a large retinue and a gift of returned tools, previously stolen from the colonists, Massasoit accepted Plymouth gift reciprocity, agreed on the aforementioned Plymouth-Wampanoag treaty of alliance, and left with the colonists both Samoset and Squanto as interpreters and advisers. New Plymouth's insertion into the realm of Indian diplomacy provided the colonists with a measure of security and the resources (Samoset, Squanto, and, soon afterward, Hobbomok) for continued comprehension of and participation in Native American political systems.[15]

Plymouth leaders found it necessary to adapt to Native American diplomatic patterns because Indian political and military strength was considerable relative to that of the colonists in the early 1620's. Uncovering Plymouth violations of the 1621

[13] Ibid., 76.
[14] Ibid., 79-80.
[15] Ibid. 81.

agreement, Neal Salisbury argued that the Plymouth-Wampanoag treaty was "not of alliance and friendship between equals but of submission by one party to the domination of the other."[16] Salisbury's critique was half correct in that in at least the initial years of alliance, the relationship was based on subordination of one group to the other. However, Salisbury was mistaken in asserting that the alliance was dominated by New Plymouth.

Bradford revealed that in 1621 the colonists decided "to see their new friend Massasoit, and to bestow upon him some gratuity to bind him the faster unto them." Bradford sent Plymouth representatives Edward Winslow and Stephen Hopkins to the Wampanoag to deliver to Massasoit "a suit of clothes and a horseman's coat, with some other small things, which were kindly accepted." However, no goods of any sort were bestowed on the Plymouth representatives—Bradford excused this omission explaining that Winslow and Hopkins were given no food or gifts because of the Wampanoag's poverty, despite Massasoit's provisioning of the colonists earlier that year—revealing the internal political dynamics of the relationship.[17] The Wampanoag leader avoided a reciprocal gift exchange among parties, revealing Massasoit's dominant position over the colonists. The "gratuity" offered to the sachem was, in fact, a tribute payment which gained for the colonists an Indian advocate and defender. That same month Massasoit arranged for the release of colonist John Billington from his captors, the Indians encountered by Standish at Cape Cod. Massasoit and the Cape Cod Indians required the Pilgrims to give "full

[16] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 115.
[17] Bradford, 85 and 87.

satisfaction to those whose corn they had found and taken." As a result, Plymouth gained a "pretty well established" relationship of "peace and acquaintance" with their former enemies as a result of the Wampanoag sachem's mediation. Similarly, that August Massasoit arranged a peaceful settlement to disputes and small-scale violence between Plymouth and Corbitant, sachem of the Pocasset and subordinate of the Wampanoag leader. Through Massasoit's intervention as defender and advocate, the Plymouth colonists gained peaceful relationships with "divers sachems" throughout southern New England.[18] Intercultural relations improved for the colonists as a result of integration into Native American political culture and temporary subordination to the Wampanoag sachem. Plymouth colony historian Eugene A. Stratton accurately commented that Pilgrim "relations with the Indians, at least the nearby Wampanoags under the supreme chief, Massasoit, were good" following the 1621 alliance.[19]

Having established diplomatic standing, Plymouth colonists began a second equally crucial process of adaptation: the creation of a colonial subsistence economy. During the first half-decade of Plymouth settlement, food shortages were a chronic problem. The colonists' conflicts with neighboring Indians during 1620 and 1621 were often over the forcible acquisition of Indian corn. What little food supplies they had were either gifts from Native Americans, or, during the summer of 1621, gathered wild foods and game. The "Adventurers" did not ship adequate food supplies to the colony and settlers were left to discover those resources for themselves. Attempts to grow familiar English crops were unsuccessful.

[18] Ibid., 87-89.
[19] Stratton, 22.

Squanto provided the colonists with the means to feed themselves in 1621 by teaching them how to plant, fertilize, harvest, and prepare corn. Further, Squanto taught the colonists "where to get other [Native American] provisions necessary for them." The following year, the colony's food supplies had only slightly increased "because they were not yet well acquainted with the manner of Indian corn (and they had no other)." For this reason, as well as in response to social conflict, the colonial government dissolved communal lands in 1623, dividing agricultural holdings and redistributing them into private hands for corn production. Bradford claimed "much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been." The colonists used so much corn as seed that soon "all their [the colonists'] victuals were spent." Settlers then relied on their instructions for gathering "other provisions." The colony survived by utilizing Indian techniques for fishing, hunting, and the gathering of wild foods. By 1624, the colony was able to subsist on corn production.[20] This development led Salisbury to conclude that "an outsider entering Plymouth within the next year [1623-24] might have thought that the colonists had 'gone native.'"[21] Insertion into Indian diplomatic networks gained Plymouth security and this development of corn agriculture brought the colony subsistence.

Yet, a third pressing concern encouraged colonists to enmesh themselves still further into the world of Native Americans: debt and commercial trade. As early as July 1621, the Adventurers were enquiring into the colony's economic viability and demanding the payment of debt in trade goods. "Being altogether unprovided for

[20] Bradford, 85, 89-90, 102, 112, and 120-123.
[21] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 142.

trade" with the Indians, the colonists sought a way to provision a ship with goods. The colonial government chose to use clapboard as payment. More significantly, on Squanto's recommendation, the colonists acquired as many beaver and otter skins as they could by trading away what few "trifling commodities brought with them at first." Advances in corn cultivation provided the key to success in trade. Corn, as among Native Americans, became a medium of exchange in the colony in 1624. The following year, the colony was trading corn for furs among the Indians of the Kennebec River, tapping into pre-existing Native American maize-for-furs exchange patterns. Still unable to acquire sufficient trade goods, by 1626, Bradford claimed that corn production for the Indian trade was the basis of the colonial economy. That same year, the colony expanded its shipping capabilities to facilitate the trade and compete more effectively against other Europeans who "went and filled the Indians with corn and beat down the price." In 1627, trade expansion southward began with the construction of a pinnace and house at Manomet. In July 1627, the colony sought to eliminate its debt with the London Adventurers by organizing the Plymouth Undertakers. The Undertakers agreed to monopolize the fur trade within the colony for six years so as to discharge their debt. The Plymouth courts initiated an annual tax of three bushels of corn or six pounds of tobacco per household to alleviate the financial burden. By 1628, the colony secured a patent for Kennebec, built a trading house, and profited enough to begin adding European-produced trade goods as exchange items. The exchange in corn for furs continued despite the addition of new trade items.[22]

[22] Bradford, 145, 178-183, and 193-195.

The expansion of maize agriculture among Plymouth colonists resulted in population dispersal. By 1623, the year in which corn production became the focus of Plymouth agricultural activities, the general body of Adventurers advised the Plymouth colonists not to disperse to more fertile lands. Bradford revealed that by the following year corn had become so valuable that colonists were trying to "increase their tillage to better advantage." Salisbury noted that "ironically, this system of land distribution resembled that of the Indians." The colony granted one acre allotments "as near the town as might be" in order "that they might be kept close together, both for more safety and defense." Yet, with the 1627 "Division of Land," the colony's demography changed considerably. The population dispersed, and independent households were established as isolated agricultural units. The founding of Massachusetts Bay colony in 1630 resulted in a dramatic price increase for corn and livestock, further encouraging this development. By 1633 Bradford asserted that "in other regards this benefit turned to their hurt, and this accession of strength to their weakness." By increasing their land holdings for greater corn and livestock production, colonists, as Bradford explained, "were scattered all over the Bay quickly and the town in which they lived compactly till now was left very thin and in a short time almost desolate."[23] That year, the Plymouth courts tried to provide incentives for colonists to remain within the town limits, the original "inhabitants being for the most part removed . . . [and] elsewhere seated."[24] Historian John Demos commented that "the simple factor of geographical mobility" characterized life at Plymouth.

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[23] Bradford, 129, 145, and 253; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 142.
[24] Shurtleff, *New Plymouth*, vol. 1, 17.

Colonists John Alden, Miles Standish, Jonathan Brewster, and others left Plymouth village to "take up lots" at Duxbury during the 1620's. Colonists migrated to coastal locations to the north and south during the late 1620's. By the 1630's, Plymouth colonists moved inland as well. In addition to the establishment of "numerous smaller villages and hamlets," Plymouth colonists incorporated towns at Scituate in 1636, Duxbury in 1637, Barnstable in 1639, Taunton in 1639, Sandwich in 1639, Yarmouth in 1639, and Marshfield in 1641. As Demos noted, "the process of dispersion, begun so early, was never halted."[25] Tapping into the Indian maize-for-furs exchange gave Plymouth colonists the ability to pay their European creditors. However, corn production encouraged colonists to disperse throughout the region, putting them in closer contact with Native Americans while simultaneously limiting the ability of the colonial courts to monitor their behavior.

Colonial interactions with Native Americans during 1620 and 1621 convinced Bradford and other colony leaders to adapt to the existing Indian political system. Through the 1621 Wampanoag-Plymouth alliance, Massasoit facilitated the entry of the Plymouth community into the world of Algonquian diplomacy in New England. Integration into that system was essential to the survival of the colony. Plymouth gained standing and recognition as a community with a legitimate right to live on and use the lands they settled. Legitimation ameliorated violent hostilities between the colonists and their Pokanoket neighbors. This diplomatic trend continued throughout the 1620's and 1630's.[26] Yet population dispersal and geographic expansion for the

[25] Demos, 9-11.
[26] Stratton, 22-23.

pursuit of maize agriculture brought colonists into more frequent contact with Wampanoag-Pokanoket, Narragansett, Pequot, Mohegan, and Pawtuxet Indians. As colonists and Indians formed new economic and social bonds across the cultural divide, colonial leaders took steps to ensure adherence to Pilgrim social and cultural norms.

Salisbury observed that "social segregation" was "a component of" . . . Plymouth's official "relationship with its 'ally'".[27] As early as the 1621 Wampanoag treaty, colonial leaders' interest in encouraging segregation was a fundamental element of colony-Native American relations. That segregation, however, was largely a reactionary ideal held by Plymouth leaders. In principle, colonial officials shunned social and cultural integration between peoples. Yet, in practice those leaders were more interested in establishing a peaceful relationship with their Indian neighbors in the early 1620's. As economic and diplomatic integration and accommodation increased, intimate intermingling between English and Indian peoples became more prevalent. In a letter to George Morton dating December 11, 1621, Edward Winslow wrote that after the treaty with Massasoit, the Indians were "very faithful in their covenant of peace." Winslow illustrated the new-found sense of security in Plymouth by telling Morton, "we for our parts walk as peaceably and safely in the wood as in the highways in England."[28] Political integration, thus, brought security to colonists at that time, at least with local Indian neighbors.

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[27] Salisbury, 118.

[28] Edward Winslow, "A Letter Sent from New England to a Friend" in *A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth: Mourt's Relation* ed. Dwight B. Heath (New York: Corinth Books, 1963), 83.

Colonists found that social integration came with the establishment of diplomatic ties. Winslow also told Morton that "we often go to them [local Native Americans], and they come to us; some of us have been fifty miles by land in the country with them," and that "we entertain them familiarly in our houses, and they as friendly bestowing their venison on us."[29] Despite the elite ideal of social segregation for the maintenance of cultural identity, colonists and Indians alike mingled freely with each other in the first year of settlement.

In 1621, Thomas Weston established an English plantation at Wessagusset on the southern end of Boston Bay. Bradford and other Plymouth officials saw in Wessagusset some of the dangers they feared might result from cross-cultural familiarity between peoples. By 1623, settlers at Weston's plantation suffered considerable economic hardship and faced starvation. Unlike the colonists at Plymouth three years earlier, the Wessagusset men failed to maintain consistent and regulated relations with local Indians. Although Weston's settlers did not achieve the level of integration into Indian political society as had the Pilgrim colonists in 1621, the immigrants at Wessagusset did engage in considerable social intermingling with Massachusett peoples. When settlers began stealing corn from their neighbors, the Indians responded with hostility and threatened to resort to violence. Bradford sent Captain Miles Standish to investigate the situation, who promptly escorted some of

[29] Ibid.

the Wessagusset colonists from Massachusetts Bay to Plymouth, while others left for Maine.[30]

Bradford's comments about the incident revealed some of his concerns about social integration. Bradford attributed the troubles at Weston's colony to a poor ordering of their community and lack of government, which resulted in poverty and undesirable behaviors. Bradford criticized some of the settlers because they may have been "keeping Indian women." Bradford remarked that some of the settlers, "so base were they," that they "became servants to the Indians." Bradford also revealed that Wessagusset settlers "in the end . . . were fain to hang one of their men whom they could not reclaim from stealing, to give the Indians content."[31] In this example, local Indians dominated Weston's men and forced the colonists to adhere to the Indians' conception of law and justice. The lesson Bradford appears to have learned from the Wessagusset incident was that the poor ordering of an English community in New England resulted in immoral behavior, subjugation to Indians, and the ultimate failure of a colonial enterprise.

Pilgrim leaders recognized the possibility of unwanted cultural exchange among the settlers at Wessagusset. Weston's people were not Separatists, did not belong to the Plymouth community, and represented a departure from the model of Pilgrim identity espoused by colonial leaders. To Bradford and many of his elite Pilgrim colleagues, the behavior of individuals outside of their community raised a specter of change and uncertainty. The Wessagusset affair revealed two lessons to

[30] Bradford, 116-118; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 133.
[31] Ibid., 116-117.

Plymouth observers: a failure to maintain diplomatic and economic integration with Native American communities resulted in the poverty of colonists and submission to Indians, and the failure to maintain a distinct communal identity through the strict application of regulations guiding behavior caused a breakdown of accepted social and cultural norms.

Pilgrim leaders became determined not to let Plymouth colony follow the example set by the settlers at Wessagusset. Plymouth officials went to considerable effort to maintain a monopoly over the regulation and enforcement of social norms and the power of church and civil government. Thus, in 1625, Plymouth officials exiled John Oldham, who had arrived in the colony two years earlier, and the Reverend John Lyford from Plymouth for "subversion" and "ill-carriage" as well as an intention to attempt "a reformation in church and commonwealth in the Pilgrim colony." After having spoken against the colony's leadership, Oldham and Lyford "withdrew themselves and set up a public meeting apart on the Lord's Day."[32] To the Plymouth elite, such actions threatened to weaken the control of church and state government over the behavior of individuals and compromised the group identity of the Pilgrim community.[33]

By 1628, Plymouth leaders identified another threat to their prescribed social order and understanding of communal identity. After Captain Wollaston decided to abandon his plans to establish a plantation in Massachusetts at Mount Wollaston in 1625, one of his lesser associates, Thomas Morton, took over the colony and renamed

[32] Ibid., 149-150.
[33] Ibid., 116.

it Merrymount. To Bradford and the Plymouth authorities, Morton and his colony represented a threefold threat to the Pilgrim community. First, Morton flagrantly overturned the government of Mount Wollaston and freed its former leader's servants. Plymouth leaders considered the rebellion a precedent that compromised governmental authority in their colony. Second, Morton sold arms and ammunition to Native Americans, and Plymouth officials considered these cross-cultural commercial actions a threat to other English communities in the region "who lived stragglingly and were of no strength in any place." Bradford believed that Morton's practice of supplying Native Americans with firearms made him and his associates "evil instruments and traitors to their neighbours and country."[34] Third, Morton and the residents of his community broke behavioral mores deemed essential by Plymouth authorities, and crossed the cultural divide by encouraging intimate familiarity between Indians and European colonists.

To Plymouth leaders, Thomas Morton's transgressions threatened the ideal of Pilgrim identity. Morton's arms sales to Native Americans compromised Plymouth officials' tenuous sense of military superiority. Plymouth leaders considered a superior strength of arms to be an essential component in their newly-established diplomatic and economic relationships with Indians of New England. In Plymouth, officials resisted the social integration and cross-cultural familiarity encouraged through the establishment of cooperative diplomatic and economic ties with local Indian peoples. Morton's close familiarity with Native Americans stood in stark contrast to the partially realized ideal of social segregation upheld at Plymouth by the

[34] Ibid., 208.

colony's leadership. Colonists and Indians at Merrymount lived together, drank alcohol and feasted together, hunted together, traded together, and shared each other's beds. Bradford claimed that Morton and the residents of Merrymount invited "the Indian women for their consorts, dancing and frisking together like so many fairies, or furies, rather; and worse practices." Bradford called Morton "the Lord of Misrule" and described Merrymount as a "School of Atheism" where people engaged in the "beastly practices of the mad Bacchanalians."[35] Thomas Morton and the settlers at Merrymount exhibited a wide range of behaviors considered taboo by Plymouth authorities. Moreover, Morton's rebellion against Captain Wollaston's appointed officials represented an attack against the authority Plymouth leaders deemed necessary to prevent moral depravity and the degeneration of the communal Pilgrim ideal. As historian Michael Zuckerman accurately commented, "Morton forced upon them [Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Puritans] their most haunting anxieties, that immersion in the wilderness and association with the Indian would weaken the discipline they maintained so tenuously over their own impulses."[36] Morton and Merrymount presented a precedent most feared by the Plymouth elite: to the leaders at New Plymouth, inadequate security, the weakening of governmental authority, and intimate cross-cultural interaction threatened the moral composition and group cohesion of the Pilgrim colony and, ultimately, the idealized identity of their community. In 1628, Plymouth officials responded to that threat by imprisoning

[35] Ibid., 205-206.
[36] Michael Zuckerman, "Pilgrims in the Wilderness: Community, Modernity, and the Maypole at Merry Mount," *The New England Quarterly*, 50, no. 2 (June 1977), 264-265.

Morton on the desolate Isle of Shoals off the New England coast and exiling him to England.

The New Plymouth court system enforced behavioral norms in an effort to preserve elite notions of communal identity. The Plymouth court records began in 1633, from which point elite trends toward shaping group identity can be traced. Between 1855 and 1861, Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulisfer compiled and edited all surviving colonial court and legal records in a twelve volume series ranging in date from 1620 to 1692. Shurtleff and Pulsifer transcribed the proceedings of the General Court and the Court of Assistants between 1633 and 1691 in the first six volumes. Those records are the most complete source of legal history for colonial Plymouth.

By dividing the proceedings of the Plymouth General Court and Court of Assistants into four main groupings dealing with the development of religious and moral codes, an economic system, government and infrastructure, and security, an accurate understanding is ascertained of the concerns of Plymouth leaders during the 1630's. This analysis reveals the degree to which the official regulation of individual behavior conformed to elite notions of communal identity exhibited in the 1620's. The conditions of the 1621 Wampanoag treaty revealed that Plymouth leaders believed that forging diplomatic and economic ties with Native Americans was necessary. Yet the treaty resulted in an increase in cross-cultural contact and colonial elites maneuvered to enforce segregation for the preservation of communal identity. During the Wessagusset affair of 1623, Plymouth leaders recognized the need to maintain a strong colonial government to determine the character of relationships

between Indians and colonists, and to enforce adherence to prescribed behavioral norms among settlers. The Thomas Morton controversy of 1628 convinced Plymouth leaders that the failure of government to regulate the conduct of settlers and interactions between colonists and Native Americans threatened to destroy the moral composition and group identity of the colony. During the 1630's, Plymouth leaders continued to manifest concerns about the behavior and morality of colonists. By the second decade of Plymouth's existence, colonial elites recognized the complete segregation of colonists and Indians was not plausible. Despite official efforts to maintain segregation, diplomatic and economic integration into Native American societies increasingly brought colonists and Indians into personal and familiar contact. With segregation impossible, colonial leaders sought to maintain community identity through the repression of behavioral deviations among individual colonists. The records of the courts at New Plymouth from 1633 through 1639 revealed that colony officials accepted, though did not necessarily approve of, social integration of colonists and Native Americans. The following analysis reveals that in response to this situation, colony leaders grew increasingly concerned about the identity and moral composition of the colonial community as evidenced by efforts to enforce standards of behavior.[37]

[37] The database used in this study was drawn from Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer's *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, Boston: Press of W. White, 1855, vol. 1. For the current study the Court proceedings dating between 1633 and 1639 were analyzed statistically to gain an understanding of the degree to which the regulation of behavior concerned colonial officials and affected elite notions of communal identity. The court proceedings were divided into four main categories: the category of religious and moral issues consist of court actions pertaining to the regulation of moral behavior, the prevention and punishment of criminal behavior, and the maintenance of religious codes of conduct and public ceremonies; the infrastructural development category consisted of all court actions pertaining to improvements in transportation, the establishment of church and governmental institutions, public projects, and the establishment of towns or marking of

*Table 1*
Percent of all Court Actions by Main Categories (1633-1639)

| | |
|---|---|
| Religious/Moral Issues | 26.9 |
| Infrastructural Development | 17.7 |
| Economic Development | 52.0 |
| Security | 3.4 |

Source: Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, in New England* (Boston: Press of W. White, 1855) vol. 1.

As revealed in Table 1, most court activity in Plymouth during the 1630's pertained to the economy, followed by concerns over behavior and religious obligation, the development of the colony's government and infrastructure, and the maintenance of a security system. Economic development was of primary concern among the Plymouth leadership. Fifty-two percent of all court activities between 1633 and 1639 pertained to the regulation and expansion of the colonial economy. The economic development category consisted of all trade and agricultural regulations, land and property transfers, issues of debt, and actions affecting labor. Court orders falling under the religious and moral category covered a wide range of issues, including court actions pertaining to the regulation of moral behavior, the prevention and punishment of criminal behavior, and the maintenance of religious

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town borders and property; the economic development category consisted of all trade and agricultural regulations, land and property transfers, issues of debt, and actions affecting labor; the security category consisted of all court actions pertaining to Court relations with Native American peoples, the establishment of a military security system, and incidents of military deployment. Each of the four main categories was divided into more specific subcategories that clarified the exact nature of each court action. Court actions, referred to as court orders, that enacted legislation were combined with actions enforcing law because of the reactionary nature of Plymouth's court proceedings during the 1630's. The initial enactment of any given piece of legislation during this period was usually in response to a specific incident, and the enactment of a law served as the first incidence of that law's enforcement. Through a tabulation of the types of laws and actions ordered by the Plymouth General Court and Court of Assistants, a more accurate understanding of the concerns of colonial officials was ascertained.

codes of conduct and public ceremonies. The religious and moral grouping was subdivided into categories relating to theft and property-related crimes; incidences of violence between colonists; improper behavior including fornication, adultery, sexual deviation, drunkenness, public lewdness or rowdiness, and inappropriate private gatherings; insubordination including slander and defamation of public officials; Sabbath-breaking; and public rituals including marriages, days of humiliation, and days of thanksgiving. Between 1633 and 1639, 26.9 percent of all court proceedings pertained to those religious and moral groupings. During the same period, 17.7 percent of all court orders fell under the category of government and infrastructure. The infrastructural development category consisted of all court actions pertaining to improvements in transportation, the establishment of church and governmental institutions, the election of individuals to office, the appointment and maintenance of minor public officials, public projects, and the establishment of towns or marking of town borders and property. Orders pertaining to the development and maintenance of a colonial system of security represented merely 3.4 percent of all court actions between 1633 and 1639. The security category consisted of all court actions pertaining to Court relations with Native American peoples, the establishment of a military security system, and incidents of military deployment.

A year by year analysis of court actions falling under the religious and moral category between 1633 and 1636, however, revealed that Plymouth officials dealt increasingly with issues of behavior as the decade progressed. As revealed in Table 2, during 1633 the Plymouth courts tried eleven cases falling under the religious and moral grouping. That figure remained consistent the following year when the courts

took eleven actions dealing with religious and moral issues. Yet, orders dealing with religious and moral issues comprised a higher percentage of court activities across all four main categories in 1634 (12.2 percent in 1633 and 19 percent in 1634). As Table 2 revealed, issues of economic development declined considerably during this period. The number of court actions falling under the categories of religious and moral issues, government and infrastructure, and security remained consistent while cases dealing with the economy declined in number. Despite a precipitous drop in all court activity during 1635, orders dealing with religious and moral issues consistently appeared in the court records. By 1636, the courts tried twenty separate cases dealing with religious and moral codes, representing over a quarter of all court activity that year. Between 1633 and 1636, the Plymouth General Court and Court of Assistants consistently remained concerned about behavioral regulations even at the expense of economic development.

During the next three years, the General Court and Court of Assistants increasingly dealt with issues of behavioral regulation, reflecting a growing concern about communal identity among Plymouth elites during the second half of the 1630's. The Plymouth courts more frequently punished crimes including drunkenness, fornication, adultery, sexual deviation, lewdness, and illicit private gatherings. A trend in which Plymouth officials put ever greater emphasis on the regulation of individual behavior, the enforcement of collective morality, and the maintenance of an ideal communal identity began during the second half of the 1630's.

In 1637, the Plymouth courts issued thirty-four orders relating to religious and moral issues. Religious and moral orders that year represented nearly a quarter of all

*Table 2*
Percentages of Main Category Orders by Year (1633-1639)

| 1633 | Number of cases | Percent of annual legislation across all categories |
|---|---|---|
| Religious/Moral Issues | 11 | 12.2 |
| Infrastructural Development | 13 | 14.4 |
| Economic Development | 63 | 70.0 |
| Security | 3 | 3.3 |

| 1634 | Number of cases | Percent of annual legislation across all categories |
|---|---|---|
| Religious/Moral Issues | 11 | 19.0 |
| Infrastructural Development | 13 | 22.4 |
| Economic Development | 30 | 51.7 |
| Security | 4 | 6.9 |

| 1635 | Number of cases | Percent of annual legislation across all categories |
|---|---|---|
| Religious/Moral Issues | 5 | 17.9 |
| Infrastructural Development | 8 | 28.6 |
| Economic Development | 11 | 39.3 |
| Security | 4 | 14.3 |

| 1636 | Number of cases | Percent of annual legislation across all categories |
|---|---|---|
| Religious/Moral Issues | 20 | 26.0 |
| Infrastructural Development | 14 | 18.2 |
| Economic Development | 39 | 52.0 |
| Security | 3 | 3.9 |

| 1637 | Number of cases | Percent of annual legislation across all categories |
|---|---|---|
| Religious/Moral Issues | 34 | 23.1 |
| Infrastructural Development | 21 | 14.3 |
| Economic Development | 81 | 55.1 |
| Security | 11 | 7.5 |

| 1638 | Number of cases | Percent of annual legislation across all categories |
|---|---|---|
| Religious/Moral Issues | 100 | 32.2 |
| Infrastructural Development | 52 | 15.8 |
| Economic Development | 161 | 50.8 |
| Security | 4 | 1.3 |

| 1639 | Number of cases | Percent of annual legislation across all categories |
|---|---|---|
| Religious/Moral Issues | 69 | 31.5 |
| Infrastructural Development | 46 | 21.3 |
| Economic Development | 105 | 45.8 |
| Security | 3 | 1.4 |

Source: Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, in New England* (Boston: Press of W. White, 1855), vol. 1.

court actions across the four main categories in 1637. The regulation of behavior and morality within the colony grew further in significance in 1638, the year following the Pequot War. That year, the Plymouth courts issued more orders dealing with religious and moral issues than in any other year during the period under study. The courts tried 100 cases dealing with religious and moral issues, a figure comprising 32.2 percent of the annual legislation across all main categories, while representing an astonishing 40.6 percent of all court actions within the religious and moral category between 1633 and 1639. The religious and moral orders issued by the General Court and Court of Assistants in 1638 represented 10.9 percent of all court actions across all four main categories during the 1630's. In 1639, the Plymouth courts issued only sixty-nine orders related to religious and moral codes. Yet, that figure represented 31.5 percent of all court activity that year. The number of court actions relating to religious and moral codes increased in number on an annual basis during every year

other than the anomaly of 1635 and the decline of 1639. Additionally, between 1636 and 1639 court activity pertaining to those issues represented between 23.1 and 32.2 percent of all annual legislation. The absolute number of annual court actions dealing with religious and moral codes observed an upward trend, while representing a significant percentage of all court activity during the period of study.

The total number of court cases dealing with the regulation of behavior and enforcement of religious codes of conduct increased at a rate greater than that of population increase within the colony. Earlier, in the 1620's, only slightly more than 500 English colonists lived in southern New England. More than 15,000 English colonists resided in the region by 1630, and almost 18,500 English people lived in southern New England by 1640.[38] However, the number of people residing within Plymouth colony was considerably smaller than that of the general region. Population estimates for New Plymouth during the 1620's and 1630's are scant and available for only a few years. The records do indicate that Plymouth's population was small compared to that of Massachusetts Bay. Growth during the 1620's was minimal. Following 1630, Plymouth's population gradually increased. Neal Salisbury estimated that roughly 100 English settlers, augmented by an uncertain number of visiting fishermen, lived between the town of Plymouth and the colony's Kennebec River outpost by the middle of the 1620's. Basing his figures on information provided in Plymouth's third patent granted to William Bradford on January 13, 1630, Eugene Aubrey Stratton recorded the colony's population at almost three hundred by the opening of the 1630's. Stratton also estimated that during the years

[38] Bragdon, 28

immediately following 1630, the Plymouth population numbered between 350 and 400. Throughout the 1630's "Plymouth was growing, but growing modestly." Stratton revealed that as late as 1643, only 147 male residents between the ages of sixteen and sixty resided within the town of Plymouth. When the separate colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, New Haven and Plymouth formed the United Colonies of New England in August 1643, the total male population between sixteen and sixty residing within the entire colony of Plymouth numbered only about 600. Stratton estimated that the total population, including women, children, and men over sixty numbered roughly 2000 by 1643. John Demos estimated that even by the close of the seventeenth century, Plymouth's population numbered only 10,000.[39]

That gradual increase in population toward the close of the 1630's partially explained why over two fifths of all religious and moral orders for the decade were issued in 1638. Yet, orders relating to religious and moral issues represented almost one third of all court activity that year, revealing that the regulation of behavior became a prominent concern of Plymouth officials in the latter half of the 1630's. In 1639, the courts issued 27.1 percent of all orders pertaining to behavioral modification, which was a considerable drop from the previous year. In 1639, 31.5 percent of the annual court actions consisted of orders falling under the category of religious and moral issues. Orders relating to economic development dropped from 70 percent of all annual court activity in 1633 to only 45.8 percent in 1639. Meanwhile, orders relating to religious and moral issues rose from a mere 12.2 percent of all annual court activity in 1633 to 31.5 percent in 1639. While the

[39] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 152; Stratton, 40, 50-51, 58, 70; Demos, 98.

population of Plymouth grew in small increments during the 1630's, the frequency with which the Colony's courts addressed issues of morality and behavior increased dramatically. Officials' interest in regulating behavior grew at a rate far greater than that of population increase.

The frequency with which the Plymouth courts issued orders pertaining to religious and moral behavior increased at a greater rate than overall court activity during half the years between 1634 and 1639. As revealed in Table 3, overall court activity at Plymouth declined by 36 percent between 1633 and 1634, while the frequency with which officials addressed religious and moral issues remained consistent. In 1635, the Plymouth courts issued fewer orders than during any other year during the period of study. Overall court activity declined by 52 percent in 1635, while court actions relating to religious and moral issues declined by a comparable 55 percent. By the following year, overall court activity across categories rose by 171 percent. Within the religious and moral subdivision, court action increased by 300 percent, a frequency change well above that of overall expansion of court activity that year. In 1637, overall court activity increased by 93 percent over the previous year. The frequency with which the Plymouth courts addressed religious and moral issues increased by 70 percent. While the rate of frequency for religious and moral issues did grow in 1637, overall court activity grew at a greater rate, largely because of increased concern over security during the Pequot War. Overall court activity increased by 116 percent the following year. While the frequency with which the courts addressed issues of economic and infrastructural development also

grew considerably in 1638, the rate of increase within the religious and moral subdivision grew by 194 percent. In 1639, both overall court activity and court action

*Table 3*
Percent Changes in Frequency of Main Category Orders by Year (1633-1639)

| Year | Religious/ Moral | | Economic | | Infrastructure | | Security | | All Court Orders | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percent Change | Frequency | Percent Change | Frequency | Percent Change | Frequency | Percent Change | Frequency | Percent Change |
| 1633 | 11 | --- | 63 | --- | 13 | --- | 3 | --- | 90 | --- |
| 1634 | 11 | 0 | 30 | -52 | 13 | 0 | 4 | +33 | 58 | -36 |
| 1635 | 5 | -55 | 11 | -157 | 8 | -38 | 4 | 0 | 28 | -52 |
| 1636 | 20 | +300 | 39 | +254 | 14 | +75 | 3 | -25 | 76 | +171 |
| 1637 | 34 | +70 | 81 | +107 | 21 | +50 | 11 | +267 | 147 | +93 |
| 1638 | 100 | +194 | 161 | +99 | 52 | +148 | 4 | -64 | 317 | +116 |
| 1639 | 69 | -31 | 105 | -35 | 46 | -12 | 3 | -25 | 223 | -30 |

Source: Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, in New England* (Boston: Press of W. White, 1855), vol.1.

within the religious and moral subdivision decreased by 30 and 31 percent respectively. From 1633 to 1639, the frequency with which the Plymouth General Court and Court of Assistants addressed religious and moral issues generally increased at a rate greater than that of overall court activity.

Throughout the 1630's, New Plymouth officials increasingly charged colonists for deviation from legally established behavioral norms. Plymouth courts

charged colonists for a wide array of behavioral transgressions including drunkenness, unlawfully entertaining guests, fornication, adultery, bestiality, idleness, homosexual activity, and public rowdiness or "ill-carriage." Colonial courts remained relatively inactive between 1633 and 1635, after which point the Plymouth General Court and Court of Assistants tried greater numbers of cases and issued larger numbers of decrees. Within the scope of religious and moral issues, Court officials became consistently more concerned about the regulation of behavioral transgressions by colonists from 1634 until the end of the decade. Table 4 itemizes the subdivisions within the religious and moral category. The table illustrates the

*Table 4*
Frequency Changes within Religious and Moral Subdivisions by Year (1635-1639)

| Year | Rituals and Ceremonies | | Improper Behavior | | Insubordination | | Property-Related Crime | | All Religious and Moral Orders | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percent Change | Frequency | Percent Change | Frequency | Percent Change | Frequency | Percent Change | Frequency | Percent Change |
| 1635 | 4 | --- | 1 | --- | 0 | --- | 0 | --- | 5 | --- |
| 1636 | 6 | +50 | 6 | +500 | 1 | --- | 1 | --- | 20 | +300 |
| 1637 | 2 | -67 | 13 | +117 | 1 | 0 | 4 | +300 | 34 | +70 |
| 1638 | 12 | +500 | 24 | +85 | 6 | +117 | 12 | +200 | 100 | +194 |
| 1639 | 18 | +50 | 23 | -4 | 5 | -17 | 1 | -92 | 69 | -31 |

Source: Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, in New England* (Boston: Press of W. White, 1855), vol. 1.

frequency with which the Plymouth courts issued resolutions for public days of prayer and ceremonies, and charged individuals for displaying improper behavior such as drunkenness, sexual misconduct, and lewdness; insubordination towards established governmental officials and institutions; and theft or other property-related crimes. Table 4 also reveals the annual change in frequency of court actions within each of those four subdivisions. Court actions pertaining to violence between colonists and Sabbath-breaking were included in the study, but are not represented in Table 4 because of their infrequency within the legal record. Additionally, court actions against colonists for unspecified crimes have not been included.

Table 4 revealed that from 1635 until 1639, the degree to which Plymouth courts charged colonists for displays of improper behavior generally increased at a greater rate than court actions dealing with religious and moral issues overall. In 1635, the Plymouth courts issued only one charge of improper behavior, while four court actions that dealt with religious and moral issues pertained to public ceremonies and rituals. Court actions pertaining to religious and moral issues increased by 300 percent in 1636. Court documented public ceremonies, which were primarily marriages, increased by 50 percent that year, while court actions pertaining to the regulation of behavior rose by 500 percent. In 1637, the Plymouth courts heard 70 percent more cases regarding religious and moral issues than in the previous year. Yet, court actions pertaining to improper behavior grew in frequency by 117 percent. Court actions within the religious and moral category grew by 194 percent in 1638 as a result of a sharp increase in the number of public rituals and a temporary increase in the number of property-related crimes. Charges of improper behavior grew in

frequency by 85 percent in 1638. Overall court activity declined in 1639. Within the religious and moral issues grouping, court actions decreased by 31 percent. Yet, court actions pertaining to individual displays of improper behavior dropped by only 4 percent in 1639. Whereas in 1638, the Plymouth courts issued twenty-four separate charges of improper behavior, in 1639 the court records reflected twenty-three such incidents. In 1635, the Plymouth courts addressed the fewest number of cases related to improper behavior and the fewest number of religious and moral issues generally: the courts issued orders pertaining to one case of improper behavior and five relating to issues of religious and moral conduct overall. Within the general religious and moral issues category, the 1638 figure of 100 incidents represented an increase of 1,900 percent between the low and high points of that half decade. Within the same period, the increase in the number of incidents falling under improper behavior from the 1635 low point of one to the 1638 high point of twenty-four represented an increase of 2,300 percent. Actions of the Plymouth General Court and Court of Assistants reflected a growing concern over religious and moral issues during the latter half of the 1630's. Yet, court actions for the regulation of individual behavior generally grew in frequency at a rate greater than that of religious and moral issues overall. The regulation of individual behavior, which Plymouth leaders linked to notions of communal identity, became more significant to court officials between 1633 and 1639. That trend reflected concerns among Plymouth leaders that conformed to elite assertions of the 1620's linking individual behavior, cross-cultural exchange, and communal identity. Plymouth leaders frowned upon social integration of colonists and Native Americans, but remained unable to force segregation or

discourage personal cross-cultural relationships through legal or extralegal means. As the court records reflect, Plymouth leaders sought to eliminate cultural degeneration and the weakening of their notions of communal identity by seeking to more strictly enforce behavioral standards. In this context, elites believed Native American culture had a negative influence on colonial morality and identity. Yet since integration became a reality at Plymouth, leaders found that communal identity could only be preserved by repressing unwanted behaviors exhibited by colonists themselves.

Despite growing concern within the Plymouth General Court and Court of Assistants over improper behavior and elite protests against cross-cultural familiarity between peoples, social integration between colonists and Indians remained common at New Plymouth. For example, in September 1639, Mary Mendame and Tinisin, "an Indian" appeared before the Plymouth Court for adultery. Mary (the wife of Robert Mendame) was punished by public whipping and was required to wear a badge revealing her crime. Tinisin, too, faced public whipping, and was required to wear a halter around his neck while tied to a post, indicating his supposed inability to resist the "allurement and incitement of the said Mary." The punishment received by Mary and Tinisin was for the crime of adultery and conformed to that of other non-interracial sexual deviancy cases tried that year.[40] Despite segregationist efforts, inter-group associations existed. Significantly, Mary was declared to have committed a moral crime, while Tinisin, despite being a Native American, was found guilty of weakness in the face of Mendame's temptations. The Tinisin Mendame case revealed

[40] Shurtleff, ed., *New Plymouth*, vol. 1, 132-133.

that oppositional ideology had not declined by the late 1630's, and that elite notions of identity and morality failed to prevent social integration. Colonial economic and diplomatic integration with Native Americans fostered social and cultural intermingling despite the segregationist goals of colony leaders. The crisis of identity was characterized by community introspection and fear of degeneration. Cross-cultural integration of peoples became a fact of life in Plymouth as early as the 1621 Wampanoag Treaty and remained so into the closing years of the 1630's. The Plymouth courts punished Mendame and Tinisin for adultery, not for the interracial character of their relationship. The Plymouth Court punished Mary Mendame and Tinisin with no more severity than in cases of adultery between two colonists. Colonial elites believed that the influence of foreign cultures compromised the identity of the Plymouth community, but the behaviors they sought to regulate were those displayed by the colonists themselves. By 1639, Plymouth elites faced a conundrum: they believed social integration and cross-cultural familiarity compromised group identity as revealed through improper displays of behavior; yet, the segregation of colonists and Indian peoples proved unattainable.

The combination of population dispersal and integration into Native American economic and diplomatic networks led to a crisis of identity in New Plymouth. Colonial leaders believed it was necessary to pursue closer economic and political ties with New England Indians. Officials in the colony realized that failure to do so would cause crippling economic hardship and invite hostilities with local Indian peoples. Yet, the increased exposure to Indian culture that resulted from the forging of those ties troubled those same colonial leaders. As was the case in Leiden during

the second decade of the seventeenth century, Pilgrim leaders feared that close familiarity with the life ways of foreign and culturally divergent communities would result in a degeneration of behavior among individual colonists, a rejection of accepted notions of belief and proper social life among immigrants, a weakening of group cohesion, and the ultimate dissolution of an identifiable Pilgrim community. As was the case in Holland, colonial leaders in New England faced an enigma: how could they live among and interact with the peoples of a vastly different culture, while maintaining the cultural identity of their own community? At Plymouth, leaders hoped to construct an ideal community and define the nature and significance of that community in their own manner and according to their own standards and values. To some, however, adaptation to the peoples and circumstances colonists faced in their new environment appeared to threaten that mission. Thus, during the 1620's and 1630's, colonial officials implemented a set of reactionary policies designed to maintain their notion of Pilgrim identity in the face of a perceived threat caused by contact with unfamiliar Native American cultures. Unable to eliminate the influence of a foreign culture upon their own, Plymouth leaders sought to maintain communal identity by forcing colonists to conform to their notions of proper behavior.

# CHAPTER 4

## MOUNTING TENSIONS

Despite diplomatic integration and social intermingling between colonists and Indians, tensions mounted between Plymouth and its Native American neighbors. Polar oppositional identification among colonial elites fostered a mistrust of Native American intentions. Adaptation to Indian diplomatic and economic patterns resulted in a crisis of communal identity among Plymouth leaders during the 1630's. Pilgrim elites from 1620 onward feared violence at the hands of their Indian neighbors and cultural degeneration within the colony as a consequence of exposure to Native American influences. Beyond those ideological concerns, relations between colonists and Indians were further strained by issues of armaments, land, and trade. By the late 1620's, Plymouth settlers came into increased contact with the more numerous and economically and militarily powerful Indian societies of southern New England. Colonists faced resistance to land and trade expansion, and colonial leaders saw in the Pequot and Narragansett peoples precisely the threat of violence and cultural degeneration that they had feared since initial colonization. Colonial leaders took steps to alleviate tensions through the courts and through diplomatic avenues. Yet officials remained unable to resolve antagonisms over land, trade, and weapons acquisition by Native Americans. These tensions perpetuated elite ideological assumptions about Indians, aggravating issues of communal identity and ultimately encouraging militarization of Plymouth society.

Concerns over the consequences of integration into the world of Native New England magnified the effects of polar oppositional identification among colonial leaders, and raised concerns about community identity. Likewise, military vulnerability derived from subsistence and settlement patterns led colonists to seek legal devices to mitigate cross-cultural conflict. The importance of economic and diplomatic accommodation led both the English at Plymouth and their Native American allies to cooperate in developing legal mechanisms to resolve conflicts. Two of the six stipulations of the Plymouth-Wampanoag alliance of 1621 specified an institutionalized method of conflict resolution between individuals of each community. The two parties agreed "That if any of his [Massasoit's people] did hurt to any of theirs [Plymouth's colonists], he should send the offender, that they might punish him," and "that if anything were taken away from any of theirs, he should cause it to be restored; and they should do the like to his."[1] Although the English did not adhere to this agreement by sending offenders to Indian sachems, they did attempt to institutionalize conflict resolution between colonists and Native Americans.

Despite initial attempts at establishing cooperative, non-violent measures of conflict resolution and a degree of social integration, oppositional identification of peoples encouraged colonists to seek a distinct military advantage over their neighbors. Mistrust and fear encouraged colonial officials to try to limit Native American access to firearms. William Bradford explained that prior to the introduction of the fur-wampum trade in New England, Native Americans there had no firearms at all. In fact, unfamiliarity with the weapons made guns very

[1] Bradford, 80.

frightening, and "the very sight of one . . . was a terror unto them [Native Americans]." However, trade in furs, corn, and ultimately wampum, and the power-building element derived thereof among Indians, encouraged the sale of firearms and ammunition to Native Americans by Europeans. Even prior to the establishment of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth settlers were well aware of the role of traders in supplying Native Americans "with pieces, powder and shot, which no laws can restrain."[2] Indeed, Bradford severely criticized Thomas Morton, who was exiled by Plymouth in 1628 and then by Massachusetts Bay in 1630, for providing Native Americans with the technologically superior weapons. Bradford claimed the result of the weapons trade of Morton and others was to make the Indians "mad, as it were, after them, and [they] would not stick to give any price they could attain to for them; accounting their bows and arrows but bables in comparison of them." Bradford even claimed that by 1628, many local Native Americans had acquired skills in ammunitions production for a wide variety of firearms of which they had a tremendous store. Well-armed Native Americans were a dominant concern of early New England colonists, some of whom believed that "some of their neighbors and friends are daily killed by the Indians, or are in danger thereof, and live but at the Indians' mercy."[3]

Despite negative effects on Native American communities, the fur trade did increase Indian access to firearms. Fear of violence by armed Native Americans was a concern partially related to English settlement patterns. New Englanders' economic

[2] Bradford, 203.
[3] Ibid., 206-207.

focus on household-oriented agricultural production resulted in the relative isolation of independent family units, especially during the course of their daily agricultural activities.[4] The Plymouth court records confirmed that by 1633, maize agriculture had "worn out" the soil immediately surrounding the town and that new fields were established farther away. William Bradford further clarified this relationship when he claimed that in 1635 French and some English traders were actively arming Native Americans. Bradford explained that the French did not fear this threat because they lived "closed up in their forts, well fortified, and live upon trade, in good security." By contrast, the English were believed to be in constant danger of "Indians with guns and munitions" because they were "living upon husbandry" and were, consequently, "open and unfortified."[5] Further, in 1637 an anonymous letter preserved by Thomas Hutchinson claimed that New England agriculture was insufficient for maintaining the increasing population. The author's fear was that if God did not increase the fertility of the land, then "it is [was] probable we must either disband ourselves, like beasts straitened in their pasture, and so be liable to destruction from the natives (I mean the Pequods) or else . . . be made the subject of some fearful famine."[6] Thus, English notions of property ownership and land improvement encouraged isolation between family units, and vulnerability to hostile Native Americans. In contrast to historians' claims that ideology was a simple pretext for conquest and land

[4] Philip J. Greven Jr., "Family Structure in Seventeenth-Century Andover, Massachusetts," in *Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development*, eds. Stanley N. Katz, John M. Murrin and Douglas Greenberg (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2001), 200.
[5] Shurtleff, ed., *New Plymouth*, vol. 1, 5-6; Bradford, 336-337.
[6] "Early 1637," in *Letters from New England: The Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1629-1638*, ed. Everett Emerson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 214.

acquisition, this evidence seems to indicate that English ideology and systems of group identification resulted in a coupling of territorial expansion with military vulnerability. Those two manifestations cannot be seen as mutually reinforcing. In essence, increased expansion led to decreased individual defensive capabilities. The concept of *vacuum domicilium*, then, did not allow for military expansion, but rather geographic expansion in the absence of adequate military support. Viewed in light of the statements above, polar oppositional identification increasingly resulted in disputes between culture-groups, military vulnerability of homesteaders, and tremendous colonial apprehension of Native Americans.

Colonial leaders feared Indians and were deeply concerned about the influence of Native American culture over their own communities. Armed Indians living outside Plymouth and Bay communities aggravated colonists' fear of violence, while Indians living within those communities worsened, at least among colonial leaders, concerns over identity and community cohesion. As a consequence of those concerns, officials in both colonies sought to ensure English military superiority with as much energy as they spent trying to enforce intra-community behavioral norms among settlers.

By the early 1630's divergent notions of land use and ownership intensified tensions between Plymouth settlers and Native Americans. While colonists believed the divine hand of God had used disease to make room for his kingdom and people, and fear of Native American violence and cultural influence was manifested throughout the colonial leadership, English settlers also believed that the laws of nature demanded a supplanting of civilization in a wilderness enthralled by savagery.

The issue of land use and ownership was contentious between English colonists and Native Americans. Drawing from their ideological worldview, settlers believed resettlement of presumably vacant lands was necessary. Colonists rationalized their land acquisitions by citing specific cultural disparities that they believed gave them a more legitimate claim to land-property ownership. The constant reaffirmation of those land principles apparent throughout the colonial records reflected a need to confirm distinctions between divergent cultures at a time when economic and diplomatic accommodation was blurring the line between English and Indian peoples.

As the Plymouth colony expanded in the mid-1620's and early 1630's, settlers encountered larger and more powerful Indian societies. Initial Pilgrim colonization at Plymouth coincided with massive disease-related depopulation of the Native American communities in the immediate area. Prior to the arrival of the Pilgrims, local Indian populations were relatively substantial: the Pawtucket had an estimated population of 12,000 with 3,000 fighting men, the Massachusett had a population of roughly 12,000 of which 3,000 were fighting men, and the Pokanoket/Wampanoag also had a population of about 12,000 with 3,000 fighting men as well. Yet between 1616 and 1619 virgin soil epidemics devastated the region. Native American populations north and south of Massachusetts Bay declined by roughly 90 percent, and settlement in the region, including the areas around Cape Cod, shrank drastically.[7] Smaller Indian populations and the presence of unoccupied land allowed Plymouth colonists to integrate into Native American diplomatic systems, acquire a

[7] Bragdon, 25-26.

claim to lands recognized by local peoples, and adapt to economic conditions in New England.

Following the 1627 land division at Plymouth, colonists dispersed throughout southern New England to pursue commercial agriculture. In the process they increasingly encountered Pequot and Narragansett peoples who had temporarily escaped the devastation of epidemic disease. Bragdon estimated that the pre-epidemic population of the Narragansett numbered 20,000 people and that of the Pequot/Mohegan at 16,000. Salisbury offered a higher pre-epidemic population estimate for southern New England. The Narragansett may have numbered between 35,000 and 40,000 people, while the Pequot and other Connecticut Valley Indians may have numbered between 28,000 and 32,000 people prior to the outbreak of disease. Even following the 1633 smallpox epidemic that devastated the region, Indian populations remained high relative to those of Massachusetts Bay and the Plymouth/Cape Cod area. Estimates for Narragansett losses range between 700 and 1000 people. Estimated Pequot losses during the 1633 epidemic are unavailable, although Salisbury believed the death rate was far higher than among the Narragansett. Nonetheless, the Connecticut Valley maintained a substantial population density. By as late as 1640, Indians living on Narragansett Bay numbered roughly 30,000 and outnumbered colonists by 10 to 1.[8] Thus, as colonists dispersed ever farther from the town of Plymouth in the late 1620's and early 1630's, they encountered Indian populations that were less willing to surrender land or integrate

[8] Bragdon, 25-28; Salisbury, 22-30, 209-210, 228.

Plymouth into their diplomatic systems. Further, southern New England Indians, even following the 1633 epidemic, possessed populations large enough to resist English land encroachment and challenge colonial claims to authority over the region.

The seasonal semi-migratory patterns of land usage, diversified economy, and Native American gender roles stood in stark contrast to English notions of proper, civilized living. When Plymouth settlers encountered the larger Indian populations of southern New England, those cultural differences aggravated inter-group tensions, encouraging a continuation of colonial militarization. English immigrants viewed field labor as an occupation specific to males. Simultaneously, the English agrarian tradition caused hunting activities to be viewed as a leisure activity with no occupational significance, despite colonial reliance on furs and game. Native American women farmers were viewed as virtual thralls ruled by the oppression of indolent males, who seemingly served no crucial economic function.[9]

Despite the development of similar settlement, subsistence, and trade patterns, divergent notions of land use further influenced relationships between Native Americans and English immigrants as they pertained to valid title of possession. English immigrants believed that people who utilized land according to European notions of sedentary agriculture were entitled to its possession. Based on this preconception, specific lands had to be used for specific agricultural functions. Native Americans, by contrast, relied on a system of usufruct rights.[10] Land in itself was not owned and transferable. Rather, Indians claimed property rights based on

[9] Kupperman, 148-153.
[10] Cronon, 62-63; O'Brien, 207.

specific productive activities engaged in on specific lands. For the English, land could only be owned if properly used. Regardless of legal deed, lands considered "unimproved" were subject to confiscation by colonial courts. On October 28, 1633, the Plymouth Court declared that local acreage owned by town residents that "lie void, their ancient inhabitants being for the most part removed from thence" was to return to the Colony's possession for redistribution to inhabitants willing to occupy and utilize them. On March 3, 1634, a law passed by the Massachusetts Court ordered that colonists granted land had three years in which to make improvements or else face forfeiture.[11] According to English notions of property rights, land itself was a salable commodity, which could be sold or purchased by individuals. Native Americans claimed rights to the use of lands and the products gained from them. While territorial claims of use could be made by Indians according to this notion, land itself could not be sold. These contradictory notions of sale and ownership led to significant conflict between Native Americans and English immigrants.[12]

Conflicting interpretations of proper land use and property title led English observers to believe that Native Americans had no legal title to the territories they utilized. Hunting grounds, for example, were considered underused and, thus, not legally owned property. Native Americans, however, claimed most of the lands involved in their seasonal migrations as hunting territories. The concept of *vacuum domicilium* resulted in English encroachments on such land. This concept declared that underused and unimproved lands were vacant and that inhabitants on such lands

[11] Shurtleff, ed., *New Plymouth* vol. 1, 17, and 114.
[12] Cronon, 67-69.

had no legal claim of ownership. Accordingly, English immigrants felt justified in claiming and settling all "vacant" Native American lands, except for "improved" planted fields.[13]

Two examples of this ideological impulse were recorded in John Smith's *Advertisements for the Planters of New England* and William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation.* In 1631, Smith posed the question "by what warrant they [colonists] might go to possess those Countries which are none of theirs, but the poor Salvages." Smith then rhetorically answered with a statement clearly reflecting seventeenth-century English notions of property rights and land use:

> And here in Florida, Virginia, New-England and Canada, is more land than all the people in Christendom can manure, and yet more to spare than all the natives of those Countries can use and culturate. And shall we here keep such a coyle for land, and at such great rents and rates, when there is so much of the world uninhabited, and as much more in other places, and as good, or rather better than any we possess, were it manured and used accordingly.[14]

The emphasis here was on land cultivation. Smith claimed that lack of agriculture was adequate grounds for land forfeiture. Bradford continued in this direction, more clearly demonstrating that a sedentary agricultural lifestyle was necessary for maintaining a legal claim to land ownership. In documenting the Pilgrims' decision to migrate to North America, he stated, "The place they had thoughts on was some of those vast and unpeopled countries of America, which are fruitful and fit for

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[13] Cronon, 56; O'Brien, 208; Francis Jennings, "Virgin Land and Savage People," *American Quarterly*, 23, no. 4 (October 1971), 521-522; Salisbury, 176-177.

[14] Smith, 10.

habitation, being devoid of all civil inhabitants, where there are only salvage and brutish men, which range up and down, little otherwise than the wild beasts."[15]

In addition to issues of land use and property, divergent ideological interpretations of trade and commerce led to misunderstandings and conflict. The fur trade further complicated intercultural relationships while magnifying the destabilizing effects of cross-cultural contact among Native American communities.

Epidemic disease led to dramatic demographic decline and socio-political disorganization among various Native American groups. Disease frequently incapacitated entire family and village units, which often disrupted the annual subsistence cycles. Starvation periodically resulted, weakening populations and increasing further susceptibility to disease. High death rates led to the disruption of kinship networks, while the unusual number of deaths among political and religious leaders caused unprecedented social instability. In consequence, many Native American communities faced incredible social uncertainty in the absence of established leadership.[16] This absence developed a power vacuum in which ambitious individuals attempted to move into positions of authority.[17]

Since existing Native American trade systems facilitated individuals in their pursuit of political authority through the redistribution of trade goods and prestige items, participation in the fur trade was a means of reconstituting Indian political culture. Yet as Native American leaders sought to build and consolidate power within this system, they increasingly came to rely on English trading partners.

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[15] Bradford, 24.

[16] Johnson, 16-17.

[17] Cronon, 88-89; Kupperman, 36-37.

European-produced goods were often valued for their symbolic worth among Native Americans. For this reason, European trade items took on a status-association when used as gift items. Simultaneously, the pre-existing role of wampum as a prestige item in gift giving exchanges took on a new functional role. During the 1640's, the English took control of wampum-producing lands in southern New England. Traders used wampum as a commodity in obtaining Native American furs. Prospective Native American leaders quickly came to realize that wampum, as well as European-produced prestige items, could be obtained through participation in the fur trade and used to enhance their own authority. Acquisition of those items became vital for gaining political power. Therefore, Native American political relationships became increasingly reliant on the purchase of European-produced and monopolized items through participation in the fur trade.[18]

Such participation left many Native Americans reliant on European-controlled items and vitally connected to the functioning of the international market. As historian William Cronon explained, increased European demand for American furs presented opportunities for political advancement among Indians. By increasing hunting levels for fur-bearing animals, Native American leaders could generate power. Unfortunately, this increased the strain on seasonal cycles of subsistence through over-hunting. When fur supplies declined in the 1640's, Native American communities faced further social and economic instability. In this way, the fur trade had an extraordinary impact on relations between Native Americans and English immigrants by utterly transforming social, economic, and political realities among the

[18] Cronon, 93-97; Salisbury, 151-152.

former group. In consequence, Native Americans began to acquire an increasingly dependent status, while English immigrants rapidly wrestled land, power, and resources from their American counterparts.[19]

Beginning in the late 1620's, tensions increased between colonists and Native American peoples who lived outside the bounds of New Plymouth. Issues of land, trade, and weapons acquisition aggravated elite notions of communal identity among Pilgrim leaders. As the increasingly dispersed population of the colony encountered more numerous southern New England peoples, efforts to alleviate hostilities grew less effective. Colonial security concerns derived from participation in the North Atlantic and Native American intraregional trade systems became pronounced. The contradiction in Plymouth leaders' attempts to integrate diplomatically and economically with Native American communities, while seeking to avoid social and cultural intermingling for the maintenance of communal identity perpetuated ideologically-based cross-cultural antagonisms. Plymouth trade activities produced distinct demographic changes in the colony, while Native American trade activities caused equally significant alterations in Indian material and military culture. By focusing so intently on communal identity through its opposition to Native American culture and failing to resolve trade and land conflicts, Plymouth leaders intensified cross-cultural antagonisms during a period of increased intermingling of peoples. During the late 1620's and 1630's, elite colonial ideology combined with conflicts

[19] Cronon, 96-99.

over land, trade, and weapons acquisition by Indians to intensify hostilities between colonists and Native Americans.

# CHAPTER 5

# MILITARIZATION

Plymouth leaders responded to concerns over possible hostilities with Native Americans through a visible militarization of New England society. Isolated on independent farms, New England colonists believed their Native American neighbors were a constant and unpredictable threat. Simply arming and training the populace was not enough to alleviate the fears associated with polarized oppositional identification and armed Indians within the "open and unfortified" New England countryside. Officials at New Plymouth developed security systems for defense against their Native American neighbors. As early as 1621, the Plymouth colony enclosed their homes, established watches and patrols, divided their population into armed "squadrons," built a palisade around the town, acquired artillery, and established strategies for defense. Throughout the 1620's and 1630's, the Plymouth fortifications were consistently repaired and expanded. In 1633 New Plymouth repaired its "ancient work of fortification" because "Christian wisdom teaches us [the Pilgrims] to depend upon God in the use of all good means for our safety." By 1636, the Plymouth government was actively arming its population and more vigorously training its militia units.[1] Leaders at Plymouth initiated a process of militarization that began in 1620 and continued to maintain their security system throughout the first two decades of colonization.

[1] Bradford, 97, 11, and 259; Shurtleff, *New Plymouth*, vol. 1, 6, 31.

In the settlers' view, a wealth of firearms was the key to survival and an alleviation of anxiety. Sir Francis Higginson wrote in September 1629, "For their [Native American] dealing with us, we neither fear them nor trust them, for forty of our musketeers will drive five hundred of them out of the field."[2] Higginson's fearless optimism, however, seemed to be uncharacteristic of New England settlers and colonial authorities quickly took measures to arm the populace. In July of 1631, the Bay Court further ordered that the militia train monthly "at a convenient place about the Indian wigwams." By 1633, the Plymouth Court declared that "in regard of our dispersion so far asunder" every freeman and inhabitant of the colony must provide adequate ammunition and a "sufficient musket, and other serviceable piece for war" for himself and "each under him able to bear arms." On March 12, 1636, the Plymouth Court ordered that "no servant coming out of his time, or other single person, be suffered to keep house . . . till such time as he . . . be competently provided of arms and munition." By December 1638, the Plymouth Court fined six residents of Sandwich for "being defective in armes."[3] Officials throughout Plymouth colony took considerable steps toward arming the male colonial populace, establishing and training militia units, and evidencing English military strength to local Native American communities.

A statistical analysis of the legislative activities of the New Plymouth courts between 1633 and 1639 revealed the influence of polar oppositional identification on colonial New England culture and society. Drawing from *Records of the Colony of*

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[2] Francis Higginson, "The Rev. Francis Higginson to His Friends at Leicester, September 1629," in *Letters from New England: The Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1629-1638*, ed., Everett Emerson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 38.
[3] Shurtleff, ed., *New Plymouth*, vol. 1, 6, 38, and 107.

*New Plymouth,* the study reveals that Plymouth society was militaristic in character, while not specifically conquest-oriented. Immigrant systems of identification resulted in a pronounced fear of Native Americans and a visibly defensive military posture. However, significant efforts were made to prevent inter-group violence. Conquest of Native American peoples was not a priority in either New Plymouth or Massachusetts Bay, and warfare, such as that seen in the devastating 1637 conflict with the Pequot, was symptomatic of ideology and competing trade concerns.

Within the category of Plymouth court orders related to security issues were included all orders dealing with cooperative legal actions to ameliorate inter-group hostilities, actions regulating the possession of arms and ammunition, the development of an English military command structure, the establishment of English military defensive structures, and the mobilization of troops. Security measures comprised 3.4 percent of all court orders in Plymouth during the 1630's. Plymouth officials initiated many of their security measures between 1620 and 1632, predating records of the Court and accounting for the relatively low percentage of orders representing security concerns. While security issues certainly received considerable attention, the frequency with which the Plymouth courts issued orders pertaining to economic concerns, the development of a colonial infrastructure, and the regulation of behavior was much higher. The colonial government was considerably concerned over security, as revealed by the scope of orders pertaining to the arming of the population and repair of fortifications. Court actions for the maintenance of a security system affected settlers throughout the colony, rather than on an individual basis as was the case in orders regulating behavior. By the 1630's, Plymouth had already

established a functioning security system, and court actions pertaining to the maintenance of security were largely routine.

When Table 1 is compared to the division of security measure types in Table 5, a more precise depiction of the concerns of the Plymouth government becomes apparent. Between 1633 and 1639, 0.4 percent of all Court orders were geared toward maintaining peaceful relations with Native Americans through cooperative legal means. Such legislation drew some Native American populations within the

*Table 5*
Frequency of Orders within Security Subdivisions

| Subdivision | Frequency | Percent of All Orders |
|---|---|---|
| Indian Relations | 4 | .4 |
| Armaments | 3 | .3 |
| Defenses | 16 | 1.7 |
| Military Deployment | 9 | 1.0 |

Source: Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, in New England* (Boston: Press of W. White, 1855) vol. 1.

colonial legal system, and provided mechanisms for conflict resolution between the two groups. Table 5 also reveals that military preparations and the maintenance of a technological advantage over Native Americans were in a maintenance phase. As noted earlier, Plymouth officials took great efforts to achieve weapons superiority during the 1620's, and orders issued by the courts during the 1630's revealed a routine continuation of that endeavor. For the same reason, only 0.3 percent of all court orders for the period issued by the Plymouth Courts pertained to the provisioning of arms and ammunition for the colonial populace. Orders establishing and regulating the training of colonial militias, the construction of fortifications and

munitions depots, and the acquisition of artillery represented merely 1.7 percent of all orders. Troop mobilization represented 1 percent of court activity. That calculation represented troop deployment against the French at Penobscot, and the Pequots in the Connecticut River Valley. Table 5 illustrates the routine character of security measures in New Plymouth during the 1630's. The Plymouth leadership established cooperative legal measures designed to settle cross-cultural disputes through official arbitration in the 1620's a trend which continued into the following decade. However, the concentration of those actions in the last two years of the 1630's revealed that those devices grew into disuse at the beginning of the Pilgrim period of identity crisis between 1635 and 1639, only to resurface following the conclusion of the Pequot War. The Plymouth courts only reinforced efforts to maintain an armed populace every two to three years (specifically in 1633, 1636, and 1638), reflecting the success of the colony's earlier armament program. The maintenance of defensive systems and fortifications, however, remained a constant concern. With the exception of 1638, the year following the close of hostilities against the Pequots, the construction of fortifications, acquisition of artillery, establishment of watches and patrols, and organization and training of militia units remained a perennial concern.

Table 6 illustrates the routine nature of efforts made by the Plymouth courts to ensure the adequate maintenance of a security system. By 1633, the population at Plymouth was well armed and officials took efforts to monitor the status of their armament program only every few years. In large part, armament efforts in the 1630's aimed to clarify the already existing security program and court decrees reflected officials' adaptation of the law in consideration of increasing population

dispersal. The court order pertaining to security in 1633 specified that households living in isolation were required to arm their servants as well as heads of household. The security order relating to armaments issued in 1636 declared that servants who were released from their indentures were required to possess arms before setting up households. That order conformed to earlier Pilgrim laws that required all adult males in the colony to possess firearms. Throughout all of the 1630's, the Plymouth courts charged colony residents for deficiency in arms only once. In 1638, court officials fined Sandwich residents for failure to maintain firearms.[4]

*Table 6*
Frequency of Court Ordered Security Measures in New Plymouth by Year (1633-1639)

| | 1633 | 1634 | 1635 | 1636 | 1637 | 1638 | 1639 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indian Relations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| Armaments | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Defenses | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Military Deployment | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, in New England* (Boston: Press of W. White, 1855), vol. 1.

Between 1633 and 1639, official efforts toward the maintenance and expansion of colony defenses were likewise routine. The frequency with which the Plymouth courts issued orders for the repair or modification of fortifications remained relatively consistent each year. The courts issued two orders annually for the repair and expansion of fortifications in the years 1633, 1636, 1637, and 1639. Plymouth

[4] Shurtleff, ed., *New Plymouth*, vol. 1, 38, and 107.

courts found it necessary to issue only four such orders in 1634 and 1635, even as tensions with Indians of the Connecticut River Valley increased. In 1638, following the conclusion of the Pequot War, Plymouth officials believed that no further modification of defensive structures was necessary until the following year. Between 1633 and 1639, court officials at Plymouth maintained a system of defenses and fortifications that had been established during the preceding decade.

Court orders pertaining to the deployment of troops best illustrated that Plymouth's security system was fully in place by the 1630's. When Plymouth agreed to commit forces to the war against the Pequots in 1637, court officials found that virtually no preparatory efforts were necessary other then the actual mobilization of existing militia units. Of the eleven court orders pertaining to the colony's security issued in 1637, nine related to troop deployment. The orders specified which militiamen would be used, which officers would lead them, how they would be provisioned, and how much soldiers would be paid. The courts issued two orders for the repair of fortifications, a number that conformed to annual trends in the maintenance of defensive structures. There was no need to issue orders that the population be armed or that new fortifications be constructed; Plymouth courts had taken those precautionary steps in the preceding years.

The combination of socio-political change and culture conflict, as influenced by ideological imperative, came to a head in 1637. The Pequot War represented the first large-scale military conflict between settlers and Native Americans in colonial New England. Examining the causes of and commentary on the war clearly revealed

the influences of English ideology on the course of events in a changing New England.

Trade relations and divergent perceptions of events were the crucial causal factors of the 1637 conflict. Prior to the introduction of English traders into the Connecticut Valley, the Dutch and Pequot had arranged a monopolistic trade relationship. The Dutch provided the Pequot with European trade items, and the Pequot maintained control of the flow of furs and wampum through the Connecticut Valley. However, English entry into the Connecticut fur trade encouraged the Dutch to bypass their Pequot associates so as to compete more effectively with Anglo traders. As a result, Pequot, Dutch, English, and Narragansett peoples scrambled to reposition themselves more advantageously in the newly developing commercial environment. English-Pequot conflict developed over the murders of John Stone in 1634 and John Oldham in 1636, both of whom were ill-reputed English traders in Connecticut. Pequot aggression, English land hunger, and divergent concepts of justice and retribution have all been cited as underlying causes of the war.[5]

However, the historical evidence clearly indicated that the English colonists interpreted the Pequot War through familiar ideological lenses. English commentators believed that the Pequot were an aggressive and murderous tribe of heathen savages who sought to increase tyrannical dominion over the peoples of the

[5] Lawrence M. Hauptman, "The Pequot War and Its Legacies," In *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, eds., Lawrence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 69-76; Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism*, 190-194; Alden T. Vaughan, "Pequots and Puritans: The Causes of the War of 1637," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 21, no. 2 (April 1964), 263-269; Alfred A. Cave, "Who Killed John Stone? A Note on the Origins of the Pequot War," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 49, no. 3 (July 1992), 517-521.

Connecticut River Valley. Historians have often dismissed these explanations as mere justifications for conquest and land acquisition. Yet such interpretations more clearly reflect the influence of polar oppositional identification and elite Pilgrim notions of cultural conflict. While issues of trade, political hegemony, and land rights certainly led to the war, English leaders preferred to see the conflict as an assault by satanic barbarians on superior civilized Christendom. The English leaders who fought against the Pequots in 1637 did not believe they were conquering their neighbors simply for land, commercial benefit, or material gain. Rather, elite notions of communal identity and their ideological understanding of their mission in the New World encouraged Plymouth leaders to view the conflict with the Pequot as war between diametrically opposed civilizations. Plymouth's entry into the conflict, then, was supported by an ideological heritage engrained in Pilgrim society in New England. Assessing the situation in a similar manner, the Massachusetts Bay troops felt compelled to massacre an entire village of Native Americans at Fort Mystic on May 26, 1637, relentlessly pursuing the survivors, and then executing and enslaving all remaining Pequot within their reach.[6] Captain John Underhill, commander of the English forces brought against Fort Mystic, best evidenced the role of English ideological and Pilgrim notions of identity in 1638:

> But the old Serpent according to his first malice stirred them [Pequot] up against the Church of Christ...so insolent were these wicked imps grown, that like the devil their commander, they run up and down as roaring Lions, compassing all corners of the Country for a prey, seeking whom they might devour: it being death to them for to rest without some wicked employment or

[6] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 221-224; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 187-201; Slotkin, 70-76.

> other, they still plotted how they might wickedly attempt some bloody enterprise upon our poor native Countrymen.[7]

With the Pequot War at an end, Plymouth officials, as well as some Native American leaders, sought to maintain peace through cooperative measures designed to limit hostilities. A trial following the murder of a young Narragansett trader by Plymouth colonists Arthur Peach, Thomas Jackson, Daniel Cross, and Richard Stinnings in 1638 revealed attempts at institutionalized conflict resolution. The Narragansett, Plymouth colonists, and settlers of Massachusetts Bay all feared the incident would result in war. The failure of Massachusetts Bay officials and Pequot leaders in earlier years to resolve tensions over the murders of John Stone in 1634 and John Oldham in 1636 had led to the devastating war of 1637. English and Indian leaders alike were anxious to avoid a similar violent outcome. An unnamed Indian sachem ordered the murderers captured and brought to Plymouth for trial. The Plymouth Court, during sessions in which both colonists and Native Americans testified, found all the defendants guilty of homicide —except for Cross, who escaped—and carried out their immediate execution. Bradford declared the action necessary in that "the country must rise and see justice done; otherwise it would raise a war."[8] The 1638 trial represented a return to more peaceful and stable methods of conflict resolution as an element of Plymouth's security system.

The decade following the Pequot War marked the beginning of an English missionary effort that was sustained throughout the seventeenth century. With the

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[7] John Underhill, *News From America* (Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1638 and 1971), 22.
[8] Bradford, 299-300; Shurtleff, *New Plymouth*, vol. 1, 96-97.

conclusion of the war of 1637, English hegemony in New England was relatively secure. While more distant groups of Native Americans still posed a threat, and warfare would again arise in the 1670's during King Philip's War, it is clear that colonists had taken a secure hold over southern New England. Attempts followed to incorporate the remaining Native American populations into English colonial society. During the 1640's, missionary activities gained momentum in Massachusetts under the leadership of John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew.

Missionary efforts represented a culmination of English ideological trends. Native American life had been drastically altered during the preceding decades. Traditional socio-political institutions broke down in consequence of disease, warfare, and changing trade relationships. In the early 1640's, English colonists attempted to alleviate settler-Native American conflicts by introducing "civilization" and Christianity to the latter group through mission-building experiments. Missionary efforts in New England most effectively revealed the role of ideology and Puritan notions of identity in English-Native American intercultural relations. With the exception of missionary Thomas Mayhew on Martha's Vineyard, missionaries believed that converts must first adopt English notions of civilization before legitimate conversion was possible. This emphasis appeared throughout John Eliot's *Indian Dialogues*, such as when Piumbukhou explained to his kinsmen, "When we exhort you to pray, and to serve the God of the English, we call you to imitate the virtues and good ways of the English, wherein you shall be acceptable to the Lord."[9] Missionaries began this process by isolating Native American populations in praying

[9] Eliot, 74.

towns. Isolated from both English colonists and more traditional Native American groups, these praying Indians began a process of assimilation in which they were required to sacrifice all vestiges of their native culture.[10] Missionaries like Eliot required praying Indians to adopt English modes of agriculture, dress, behavior, and material comfort. For example, initial laws and regulations passed in Natick and other praying towns primarily addressed issues of cultural transformation.[11] Mission-building projects were not simply a means of promoting religious conversion; they were also a means of promoting cultural conversion and eliminating the threat of hostile Native American peoples.

During the 1620's, Plymouth leaders promoted the development of a system of security to defend against potential Native American enemies. Colonial officials took steps to prevent Indians from gaining access to firearms. Leaders required the arming of all adult males in the colony and established a system of fortifications and defensive structures. During the 1630's, the Plymouth General Court and Court of Assistants maintained the colony's security system and enforced laws requiring universal armament of male settlers. Population dispersal and increased contact with more powerful southern New England Indian peoples encouraged Plymouth officials to consistently maintain a defensive military system and to safeguard the colony's

[10] Eliot, 67; James P. Ronda, "'We Are Well As We Are': An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 34, no. 1 (January 1977), 66-67; James P. Ronda, "Generations of Faith: The Christian Indians of Martha's Vineyard," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 38, no. 3 (July 1981), 369-371; Neal Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The 'Praying Indians' of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 31, no. 1 (January 1974), 30-35.

[11] Dane Morrison, *A Praying People: Massachusett Acculturation and the Failure of the Puritan Mission, 1600-1690* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 67-72.

superiority in armaments. Elite concerns over communal identity further demonized Native Americans in the minds of Plymouth elites. As colonists came into increased contact with larger Indian populations, elite efforts to maintain identity through repression of improper behavior among colonists grew in importance. Simultaneously, both ideology and tensions over land, trade, and sovereignty raised concerns over security among Pilgrim leaders and encouraged them to militarize Plymouth society. Even following the Pequot War of 1637, elite concerns about their Native American neighbors remained on an abstract cultural level. By the 1640's missionaries in New England sought not to eliminate a Native American presence, but rather to eradicate Indian culture. As was the case in Leiden prior to the Pilgrim migration to North America, leaders at Plymouth believed that the greatest obstacle to the successful development of their utopian community was the influence of foreign cultures. In response, the Plymouth leadership, defining Indian peoples as violent and degenerate counterpoints to Christian civilization, visibly militarized colonial society.

# CONCLUSION

In the opening decades of colonization at New Plymouth, accommodation between cultures and English integration into Native American diplomatic and economic systems aggravated elite ideological predispositions so as to encourage militarization and efforts to maintain communal identity. During the 1620's and 1630's, Plymouth colonists integrated into pre-existing Native American trade patterns. To remain economically viable within the North Atlantic commercial community, colonists tapped into the North-South maize-for-furs exchange network. Short on manufactured trade items, colonists at New Plymouth increasingly relied on the production of corn as a medium of exchange for furs from hunting peoples. Colonists then used those furs as payment for debt to European creditors. That increased reliance on corn, however, encouraged geographical expansion within the colony. Throughout the period, settlers migrated farther from the town of Plymouth, establishing isolated homesteads and communities to maximize agricultural yields. In the process, colonists developed necessary trade and personal relationships with Native Americans.

Intimate intercultural connections became common at New Plymouth. However, interaction and accommodation between colonists and Indians aggravated ideological predispositions among the colony's leadership that pitted the two groups as culturally antagonistic. Simultaneously, geographic expansion for corn production resulted in the isolation of individual families in the countryside and a perception of military vulnerability among colonial leaders. Intermingling between colonists and

Indians led some colonial leaders to believe, as was the case in Holland, that social and cultural degeneration was threatening the existence of an idealized New Plymouth. Plymouth leaders such as William Bradford and Edward Winslow believed that exposure to foreign and culturally divergent peoples produced behavioral deviancy within their community, weakened group cohesion, and compromised communal identity.

As an elite response to the twin concerns over military vulnerability and socio-cultural denigration, Plymouth colony leaders took specific efforts to successfully militarize society and to curb behavioral tendencies believed to compromise community identity. To build and maintain an economically viable, idealized community in New England, Plymouth colonists became increasingly geographically isolated and came into increased contact with Native American peoples. The practice of integration, however, was at odds with the ideal of cultural integrity and communal identity. In response, the antagonistic and oppositional elements of colonial ideology were magnified, resulting in an intensification of intercultural tensions, a militarization of Plymouth society, and increased efforts to regulate the behavior of colonists and maintain community identity.

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## BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

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